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Submitted to Submit an investment plan to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in England
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Investment priorities

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Your location

In which region is the lead authority based?

East of England

Your location: East of England

Select the lead authority

Select the lead authority:
East Suffolk

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Local challenges and opportunities

Local challenges and opportunities: Communities and Place

Are there any local challenges you face which fall under the Communities and Place investment priority ?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: Communities and Place

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible:

East Suffolk is predominantly a rural coastal district, with an estimated resident population of 250,373, making it the largest district in the in the UK. The district is bookended by the urban areas (towns) of Lowestoft and Felixstowe, accounting for approximately 43% of the population for the district. The rural area consists of ten market towns, alongside a significant number of villages and hamlets, with each area having its own character and community identity.

East Suffolk has a very diverse local economy, with significant economic assets and growth potential, but also, long-term socio-economic and economic regeneration challenges.

Under the communities and place investment priority the district faces a number of significant challenges, which include:

Deprivation:

East Suffolk faces higher levels of deprivation than the rest of Suffolk – covering families, working age and older people - with significant pockets of deprivation found within Lowestoft (17 of the 20 LSOAs in Lowestoft are within the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally, with a further 3 LSOAs falling within the 10% most deprived, IMD 2019).

An estimated 15,400 people in East Suffolk are affected by income deprivation (11.4%, compared to the Suffolk average of 10.2%).

6,350 children are affected by income deprivation (15.2% compared to Suffolk average of 13.6%).

9,160 older people are affected by income deprivation (10.5% compared to Suffolk average 10.2%).

13,200 of working age people are affected by employment deprivation (9.8%), against the Suffolk average of 8.3%.

14.5% of adults were in receipt of Universal Credit in East Suffolk, with Lowestoft being the highest claimant rate in the district at 24.6%, and the lowest in Kesgrave & Martlesham at 6.7%.

12% (31,189) of the overall population fall within the highest IMD quintile (20% of areas in England) for deprivation, with a further 20% (50,447) falling within IMD quintile 2, and 29% (71,601) of the population falling with IMD quintile 3.

The district also has a high number of 'Left Behind' neighbourhoods as identified within the 2019 Local Trust research. East Suffolk has the highest overall need within Suffolk, with Lowestoft identified as having very high average need.

Seven of the 20 MSOAs with the highest needs are located in Lowestoft. Carlton Colville in Lowestoft ranks as having very high needs (among the top 1% in England). East Suffolk and Ipswich have higher levels of need in terms of connectedness with an average rank of more than 1,000 places higher than across other Local Authorities in Suffolk. Lowestoft and Mildenhall perform consistently worse than the national average across all three of the dimensions of community need.

Three MSOAs in East Suffolk have the highest levels of need on each of the domains:

- Felixstowe West is ranked as having the highest needs in Suffolk on the active and engaged communities domain.
- Pakefield North has the highest needs on the connectedness domain.
- Carlton Colville has the highest needs on the civic assets measure and ranks among the top 10% on all three domains of the Community Needs Index.

East Suffolk performs worse than the national average on both the civic assets and the connectedness domains.

East Suffolk has the highest average number of food parcels out of the four Suffolk districts and borough, with 1585 people receiving food parcels in July 2021. East Suffolk also has the highest average number of people helped by foodbanks in Suffolk.

Demographics:

Just under 1 in 6 people in East Suffolk are aged under 16, which is 16.7% of the overall population, compared with the national average of 18.9%.

More than 1 in 4 people are aged 65+, which is 27.7% of the total population, compared with 18.7% nationally. A further 9,947 people are aged 85 and over, which is 4% of the total population, compared with 2.5% nationally. These figures demonstrate the significant ageing population within East Suffolk compared against national averages.

Employment:

Using 2020 ONS data, the gross weekly full-time pay by quintile for East Suffolk is lower than the national average. IMD Quintile 1 shows that weekly gross pay is £21 lower than the national average. The median quintile is even more significant, showing a £48 difference compared nationally. Quintile 5 shows an £88 difference.

The unemployment rate in East Suffolk is currently 3.7%. In 2020/21, 251 (4%) of 16–18-year-olds in East Suffolk were not in employment, education or training.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, unemployment - and in line with this Universal Credit (UC) claimant numbers - have increased. In-work poverty had already increased prior to the inception of the pandemic, however, since the start of the pandemic those claiming UC that are in employment have increased by over 100%.

14.5% of adults are in receipt of Universal Credit in East Suffolk, compared to the Suffolk average of 13.5%. Lowestoft has the highest rates of claimants at 24.6%.

Health:

Whilst the overall life expectancy figures for East Suffolk are comparable with the Suffolk and England averages, the overall figures mask areas of significant concern. For example, life expectancy in Harbour & Normanston Ward, Lowestoft, is almost 5% and 3% respectively below the national average at 75.1 for males and 80.5 for females. There is a gap of 10 / 10.4 years between a ward in Lowestoft and the Melton Ward south of the district for male and female life expectancy.

The prevalence of dementia is higher than the national average among patients at 12 of 25 GP surgeries in East Suffolk (11 similar and 2 lower). Prevalence of depression is also higher than the national average among 8 of 25 GP surgeries in East Suffolk (9 similar, 8 lower).

26.5% of primary school children are overweight or obese in East Suffolk, against the Suffolk average of 27.5%.

Transport Connectivity

Travel across the District is challenging. Transport links are dominated by the A12 which forms a 40 mile north-south connective “spine”, though journeys by car can be slow (often taking 80 minutes) and local rail services can be even slower (with trips from Felixstowe to Lowestoft taking over two hours).

High Street / Town Centre:

Smaller towns within East Suffolk are facing post pandemic revival challenges combined with lower profile and lower footfall than more well-known market / coastal towns. Following a recent survey of town centre users across East Suffolk's principle 12 towns (November 2021 to February 2022), 42% of those surveyed said they visited their town less frequently since the Covid-19 pandemic began and 53% of visitors to town centres visited for less than an hour in duration. In contrast, for many of the smaller market towns, including: Halesworth, Beccles, Bungay, Leiston, Wickham Market and Southwold, the percentage of town centre users that visited for less than hour was higher than the East Suffolk average e.g. Southwold at 72%.

Town centres are struggling, with the retail sector under pressure following the Covid-19 pandemic, exacerbating existing issues. This has been evidence through the recent town survey's completed in East Suffolk, which demonstrated a 39% decrease in those using our town centres for regular shopping trips compared to pre-pandemic. In addition to this, when asked how their business performance was in 2021 as a whole, 37% said their performance over 2021 was a little (18%) or a lot worse (19%) than in 2019. However, when consumers were asked what the key improvement would be to encourage town centre uses, improved variety of shops and more culture and events were in the top opinions. In addition to this, the average visiting party size in East Suffolk town centres was 1.93 people who spent an average of £26.64 per visit in 2021/22 according to the East Suffolk town centre user survey. National research done by the High Street Task Force shows that spend has recovered to 60-70% of pre-COVID levels in 2021 meaning that there is there possible improvement to be had in increasing our average spend across the district (source link). The East Suffolk Retail and Town Centre Survey 2021 reported that there was a total of 257 vacant retail premises across East Suffolk. Lowestoft reported a significant number of vacant properties, with 118 (14%) vacant. The next highest towns were Bungay (25), Woodbridge (18), Beccles (17) and Felixstowe (17). This is coupled with a degradation of buildings, in particular shopfronts and public realm which require repair and restoration.

East Suffolk has a prevalence of second homeowners, particular in towns such as Southwold, negatively impacting upon the sustainability of town centres. East Suffolk has more than 4,000 second homes (Office of National Statistics, n.d.), which is around 3.5% of total households, contributing to a rise in holiday lettings through agencies such as Airbnb (Source: East Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategy 2022). This impacts upon footfall, and ultimately the economic performance of some town centres, particularly within the out of season months. In 2019, 60% of all properties in Southwold were second homes meaning that local footfall in out of holiday season months see a dramatic decrease.

There is an over reliance on the retail sector and a need for diversification within town centres. Surveys conducted by Destination Research UK over the winter of 2021/22 found that 45% of all town centre businesses across the principal 12 towns were classified ‘retail other’ (e.g. clothing store and not including grocery stores). Visitors surveyed during East Suffolk Town Celebrations events in 2021 / 2022, when asked whether the festival-style events would encourage them to visit towns they wouldn't normally visit,

87% agreed; and 80% said that regular monthly events/markets would encourage them to visit the towns more often in the future.

Visitor Economy / Cultural & Heritage Sector:

There is a lack of support grants for culture, heritage and tourism related organisations located within East Suffolk, alongside lower levels of cultural activity and participation. This can be demonstrated by the fact East Suffolk is not a priority place for Arts Council funding (Levelling Up for Culture Places) and nor for National Lottery Funding meaning that local cultural development is lacking significant funding. However, local areas close to our district such as Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk are priority place for Arts Council funding creating local disadvantages across county borders.

East Suffolk suffers from a lack of brand identity, which hinders its wider appeal to visitors from outside of the locality. Visit East of England Destination Marketing Organisation (VEE DMO) have also recognised that there is work to be done to improve the areas identity and has recently developed a brief to enhance the branding of VEE. The branding brief will:

- To continue to develop East Suffolk's visitor offer through enhancing and promoting the unique coastal and marketing towns the district has to offer.
- To build on East Suffolk's community agenda around reduce social isolation by reconnecting people to the heart of their community.

East Suffolk is facing decreased engagement from volunteers in local cultural activities and events and a lack of leadership around cultural development across East Suffolk which combined with the cost-of-living crisis puts cultural activity at risk. The gross disposable income per head in 2019, New Anglia

average: £21,211.81, compared of East of England average of £24,138.58 (Norfolk & Suffolk Economic Strategy). Resulting in communities having less disposable income to spend on leisure and cultural activities leading to social inequalities. In addition to this, only 16% of town centre users surveyed by Destination Research UK is main purpose for visiting was for a 'leisure day out'.

Socio economic imbalances between the north and south of the district means that there is lower spend available for cultural and creative opportunities. Lowestoft community partnership area has the highest percentage of adults in receipt of universal credit (23.8%) in the whole of East Suffolk, compared to 10.7% in Felixstowe.

Pride in Place:

Variable levels of aspiration and pride – in self and in local places. In terms of pride of place, during the East Suffolk town centre surveys completed in 2022, town centre users were asked to 'sum up' their town in one-word. There was a mixture of positive and negative words used as cross the board, with the most common words including:

Sad, Dead, Friendly, Pleasant, Adequate, Average, Boring, Poor, Tired and Outdated.

In addition to this, the previous Waveney area is the 7th worst local authority in England for social mobility.

Access to Services:

Patchy access to, and provision of, services across the area. Rural areas disadvantaged because of (understandable) grouping of services in larger areas such as Lowestoft. Smaller communities don't have the resources, venues or capacity, particularly after Covid-19. Research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2010 found that rural households had to spend up to 20% more to achieve the same living standards as urban households, with the largest portion of this additional expense (60-100%) required for additional transport costs. For rural households on low income and 'just about managing', the additional costs associated with overcoming poor access to services and opportunities can quickly become unmanageable. This is relevant to East Suffolk due to the prevalence of market and rural towns and villages throughout the district.

Local challenges and opportunities: Communities and Place

Are there any local opportunities which fall under the Communities and Place investment priority that you intend to support?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: Communities and Place

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

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The following local opportunities have been identified under the Communities and Place Investment Priority:

Visitor Economy:

East Suffolk towns offer a range of unique experiences for visitors with several of our towns being key visitor destinations. East Suffolk has a relatively strong visitor economy, which was worth an estimated £671m to the local economy in 2019, supporting an estimated 11,000 FTE jobs, and accounting for 15% of employment in the district. A variety of distinctive towns and villages offering a rich variety of experiences.

East Suffolk is defined by its rurality, with distinctive towns and villages, and it has an outstanding natural environment alongside linked to walking and cycling and that would appeal to outdoor enthusiasts and engage new audiences. Beauty spots such as the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Carlton Marshes, Sutton Hoo, the Southern Gateway to The Broads National Park, Rendlesham Forest, and Dunwich Heath and Beach offer authentic, uplifting experiences for visitors.

The East Suffolk visitor economy is still heavily seasonal, and there are opportunities to develop a year-round visitor offer

Opportunity to build on the growth of the staycation and provide an experience-based visitor economy. Visit Britain segments domestic visitors into 5 distinct types: aspirational family fun, free and easy mini-breakers, country loving traditionalists, fuss-free value seekers and fun in the sun. Specific data is limited but anecdotal evidence suggests that East Suffolk is particularly attractive to country loving traditionalists and fun in the sun enthusiasts. These 2 segments represent 50% of all tourists in the UK.

Culture & Heritage:

The strength of the wider cultural offer including events such as the Latitude Festival, the Suffolk Show, Fist Light Festival and the Aldeburgh Music Festival at Snape, has established East Suffolk as a destination for cultural events, with capacity to further develop and grow.

East Suffolk's has a strong built heritage offer, with places such as Framlingham Castle, Sutton Hoo, and Landguard Fort. East Suffolk has more than 20 museums, 4 castles, more than 200 churches and assets such as Snape Maltings are indicative of a place steeped in historical significance and interest.

Volunteering:

Opportunities to build upon the volunteering legacy established through Covid-19, providing volunteers with meaningful opportunities to volunteer.

Town Centres / High Streets:

Each of East Suffolk's town centres is different, not least in terms of their particular shopping character, tourism offer and relationships with nearby places. This reflects links and relationships between shopping destinations offering choice and differentiation for shoppers' requirements, mobility and lifestyles.

To expand the geography, learning and work of the two Heritage Action Zones in Lowestoft, with a focus on bringing vacant and neglected buildings back into use

To further enhance opportunities around the East Suffolk Digital Towns Programme, using public Wi-Fi and Geo-sense technology data to monitor footfall and consumer habits, digitally upskilling businesses

To celebrate the high proportion of independent family run businesses in East Suffolk, with 88.9% of businesses in East Suffolk classed as a micro enterprise

To take learning and build upon a place-based approach to economic and community development / regeneration, covering Lowestoft, Leiston, Bungay, Halesworth and Saxmundham.

To continue to build and enhance positive relationships with Town and Parish Council's in East Suffolk, to allow for collaborate working, with local areas taking increased ownership of interventions

Regeneration programmes are having an impact on communities and places e.g. Lowestoft, Leiston and Felixstowe.

It is important that there is a variety of shops and a wide range of services in the towns in order for to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of retail and services ensures that the local population and visitors can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth within the local economy. Importantly, it provides local employment and helps to retain local spend rather than lose it to nearby towns.

Markets, like events, can be a major motivating factor for people to come to a town centre. The presence of a regular (albeit temporary) traditional market can add diversity to the retail offer of a town centre and can act as a catalyst for other more specialist markets to come to the area, including farmers' markets, artisan markets, continental markets, Christmas markets and night markets. All this can contribute to the area's diversity of offer, satisfy a wider range of needs and attract local residents as well as visitors from a growing catchment area.

Community:

Strong sense of pride in some communities, with further opportunities to develop place ambassadors.

Community Intervention Team in place working to support the most vulnerable in our communities – providing a bridge into services.

Emerging work around cost of living – with a programme developed with input from key stakeholders

Community Partnership Board and eight Community Partnerships providing place based leadership across the District

Significant investment in enabling our communities through the Community Partnerships and our Councillor Enabling Communities Budgets

Close working relationships with voluntary organisations and community groups as evidenced by the Covid-19 response

Local challenges and opportunities: Supporting Local Business

Are there any local challenges you face which fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority ?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: Supporting Local Business

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible:

Local businesses in East Suffolk face a number of key challenges, including:

Local Businesses / Entrepreneurs:

Availability of suitably qualified / experienced staff to fill posts associated with high street businesses. 16.7% of jobs in East Suffolk are within retail and wholesale (Norfolk & Suffolk Economic Strategy evidence report, 2022). Anecdotal evidence provided to the East Suffolk Economic Development Team is that there is a continuing struggle for high street businesses to fill vacancies, particularly within the market and coastal towns where public transport links are poorer.

Increases in running costs is a significant issue for local businesses. 8.9% of Suffolk businesses do not survive the first year (Norfolk & Suffolk Economic Strategy), which is further threatened by the cost-of-living crisis including rising energy costs and rent's, particularly for town centre premises.

Wage levels are low, particularly in the north of the district, with more jobs than the national average in lower paying industries. In the former Waveney area, the average weekly earnings according to Nomis is £499 compared to East Suffolk's average of £550.

Lack of skilled workforce in East Suffolk to support businesses. Only 39.4% of the working age population have a NVQ level 4+ qualification compared to the UK average of 43%. Qualifications in STEM subjects is 5% below the England average.

Businesses in East Suffolk face significant climate and environmental challenges, alongside rising energy costs, with the challenge to move to a Net Zero operating basis. Encouraging businesses to make investments during a cost-of-living crisis could potentially prove challenging if cash-flow is adversely impacted.

Lack of innovation support for businesses in non-digital / tech sectors to help them diversify their business and build resilience. Under 40% of Suffolk's businesses are classified as 'innovation active' by a survey conducted by BEIS in 2021 (SODA Understanding Inequalities in Suffolk May 2022). Businesses in East Suffolk are less likely to apply for Innovate UK funding than businesses elsewhere, with the district securing less funding.

Engagement in Research and Development is likely to be impacted during the cost-of-living crisis, resulting in limited investment from businesses.

A lack of suitable / available business premises for small and medium sized businesses, with insufficient existing provision of appropriate space for small businesses, limited move on space, with developers reluctant to build speculatively.

Only 45.9% of SME businesses in Suffolk survive for 5-years, which presented problems for East Suffolk's economy which is largely made of micro and small businesses. 8.9% of businesses in Suffolk do not survive the first year (New Anglia, Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy).

Key employers, such as the local ports and the tourism industry, face labour shortages and find it difficult to recruit the necessary numbers of appropriately skilled local people. This includes the export industry. According to the Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy evidence base, 10% of health and social care service businesses had 1 or more skills shortage vacancies in 2019. With 7% of business services and 6% of hotels and restaurants.

Apprenticeships in East Suffolk fell from 430 in 2016 to 299 in 2018. With 29% of all apprenticeships across New Anglia in health, public services and care. In addition to this, job numbers in Suffolk have increased from 191,000 in 2011 to 226,000 in 2021 (increasing at a slightly faster rate than the England average), with employment remaining above national average over the same time (SODA Understanding Inequalities in Suffolk 2022).

Gross disposable income average per head in 2019 in New Anglia: £21,211.81. Compared of East of England average of £24,138.58. According to the Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy 2022.

Education and skills training is not closely aligned to the needs of local businesses, resulting in local people not having the required skills to compete for higher value jobs.

Town Centres / High Streets:

Smaller market towns within East Suffolk are facing post pandemic revival challenges combined with lower profile and lower footfall than more well-known market / coastal towns. Following a recent survey of town centre users across East Suffolk's principle 12 towns (November 2021 to February 2022), 42% of those surveyed said they visited their town less frequently since the Covid-19 pandemic began and 53% of visitors to town centres visited for less than an hour in duration. In contrast, many of the smaller market towns, including: Halesworth, Beccles, Bungay, Leiston, Wickham Market and Southwold the percentage of town centre users that visited for less than hour was higher than the East Suffolk average. Including Wickham Market and Southwold at 72%. The average visiting party in East Suffolk town centres consisted of 1.93 people and spent an average of £26.64 per visit in 2021/22 according to the East Suffolk town centre user survey. National research done by the High Street Task Force shows that spend has recovered to 60-70% of pre-COVID levels in 2021 meaning that there is there possible improvement to be had in increasing our average spend across the district (source link). The East Suffolk Retail and Town Centre Survey 2021 reported that there was a total of 257 vacant retail premises across East Suffolk. Lowestoft reported a significant number of vacant properties, with 118 vacant. The next highest towns were Bungay (25), Woodbridge (18), Beccles (17) and Felixstowe (17).

Major Infrastructure:

Whilst the Sizewell C development offers significant opportunities, there will be associated challenges, in particular for the visitor economy. Research undertaken by The Suffolk Coast DMO in conjunction with Suffolk Coast AONB Partnership and a separate survey carried out for DMO, capture the concerns of visitor economy businesses, particularly those operating within a 10-mile radius of the planned construction site.

Local challenges and opportunities: Supporting Local Business

Are there any local opportunities which fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority that you intend to support?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: Supporting Local Business

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible:

There are a number of opportunities within East Suffolk under the supporting local business theme, including:

Local Business / Entrepreneurs:

East Suffolk's economy is dominated by micro and small enterprises, and with the right support, SME's could significantly boost economic growth. There are just over 9,500 businesses located within East Suffolk, of which, 88.9% are classed as either micro or small businesses. In addition, there is a high prevalence of self-employment, particularly in the south of the district. This presents opportunities to support and encourage entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, providing the conditions to enable more businesses to establish and grow.

Micro and small enterprises can take many forms, some represented by self-employed individuals, often home-based, and often with restricted ability to grow. Some of these businesses have limited growth potential, whilst others have significant potential, particularly those linked to major knowledge-based assets such as Innovation Martlesham. Many of these businesses face similar challenges and barriers to entry / growth, with opportunities to provide targeted support to tackle knowledge / skills, finding suitable business premises, cashflow / access to finance, and access to a skilled workforce.

Alongside micro and small businesses, East Suffolk has a small, established base of businesses, often family owned, which have grown to at least medium size and act as pillars for local communities, providing local jobs, supporting local supply chains and representing opportunities for sustainable growth. There are opportunities to support these businesses to continue to invest and grow within East Suffolk, working closely with them to better understand their needs and the barriers to growth.

Within East Suffolk there is approximately 25 businesses with more than 250 employees, with a further 120 businesses with between 100 – 249 employees.

Agile business support remains important, but there is a need to ensure it is focused and targeted. The pandemic has shown that all businesses should have access to business support, with more in-depth support available for high growth potential businesses, businesses transitioning to net zero and those investing in innovation.

Encouraging the formation of small businesses and an environment in which they can survive, and growth is a key ambition within the East Suffolk Economic Strategy 2022 – 2027.

Working with partners, work will focus on opportunities including:

Working with the established New Anglia Growth Hub, alongside other established business support providers to ensure it provides high-quality, coordinated support solutions for local businesses, with access to finance (grants), 1-many support on a range of topics, signposting to wider local and national business support interventions

Supporting people to turn ideas into viable business opportunities, by building upon existing business start-up support with access to training, skills and grant funding opportunities

Encouraging provision of space for small businesses across East Suffolk, including incubators and innovation centres as well as more informal space to enable growth

Enabling town centres and high streets to be small business friendly, recognising that high streets need post-Covid19 revitalisation, with opportunities to provide space for businesses, repurposing empty / vacant units

Supporting businesses to address climate / environmental challenges, moving towards net zero status

Creating deeper links with local businesses via an effective key account management programme (CRM) to improve relationship management

Increase businesses awareness and participation with business support

Encourage, influence and facilitate engagement with apprenticeship (and other) programmes

Better understand business infrastructure needs and other priorities, to enable better infrastructure planning and prioritisation

Increase collaboration between innovation hubs and clusters, bringing them together to support businesses to increase productivity through innovation, adoption of digital technologies and strengthen management capacity / capability

Supporting supply chain and procurement development

Focus on the opportunities and potential that exist in East Suffolk's seven key sectors: Agriculture, Food and Drink / Clean Energy / IT, Tech and Digital Creative / Manufacturing and Engineering / Marine and Maritime / Ports and Logistics / Visitor Economy and Cultural

Town Centres / High Streets:

East Suffolk has a diverse mixture of town centres, from larger coastal towns to market towns. There are increasing opportunities to reimagine and diversify the use of town centres and high street, with opportunities around the usage of vacant buildings and public space.

Further develop and deliver the successful East Suffolk Town Centre Revitalisation Programme, building upon pilot projects such as community events and markets to support local businesses. The East Suffolk Town Centre Revitalisation programme was developed following the research carried out by People and Places Partnership, a nationally recognised consultancy firm who have produced guidance for the LGA on how to revitalise town centres using a strategic and evidence-based approach. The research led to the East Suffolk Towns Initiative (ESTI) programme was the culmination of a large-scale town centre revitalisation research project undertaken in 2019 by People and Places Ltd to help understand the issues being faced by East Suffolk's town centres. The project sought to identify strategic priorities and initiatives for the towns and create town centre action plans through which projects could be developed and delivered with the support of both ESC grant aid and officer input.

The original aim of the ESTI programme was set within the context of town centres suffering from a decline due to the increase in out-of-town shopping and online shopping. However, during the rollout of ESTI in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began exacerbated the existing issues significantly. Combined now with a cost-of-living crisis, the impacts have, and continue to, fundamentally change the reasons why and how people visit and use town centres.

Phase 1 of ESTI provided towns with a grant pot to develop projects linked to the initial 2019 survey work but due to the pandemic, the focus of many projects was centred around galvanising the business community and the themes of place and destination featured throughout. The projects were linked to how could the towns improve their place marketing, destination promotional activity and small-scale improvements to town centre streetscape. This was particularly prominent through 2020/2021 when the rise in staycations meant the towns were seeing a marked increase in visitors, some of whom were in the area for the first time and exploring perhaps the lesser-known locations.

Encouraging and supporting the East Suffolk Digital Towns Initiative to support locally led approaches to social and economic well-being and growth. The programme has included the roll out of free-to-use public Wi-Fi in 11 key market towns along with the installation of geo-sense footfall sensors. The associated data dashboard will help better identify the needs of our town centres and assess the impact of interventions.

Inward Investment:

East Suffolk has a diverse economy, with a number of internationally significant established and emerging assets which are global magnets and centres of excellence, presenting supply chain, sector development, employment and inward investment opportunities. These assets include:

Port of Felixstowe (largest container port in the UK)

Port of Lowestoft (centre for offshore clean energy, project Lowestoft Eastern Energy Facility)

Sizewell Nuclear Power Plants (emerging investment into Sizewell C)

Adastral Park and Innovation Martlesham

Freeport East Zone

Lowestoft Gull Wing (third river crossing) and Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Programme (flood defence work)

CEFAS (Defra's Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science in Lowestoft)

Sizewell C represents a significant opportunity, which can be leveraged to encourage businesses involved in its supply chain to establish local bases, whilst also presenting opportunities for local businesses to enter the supply chain. Freeport East can also look to be a significant driver of inward investment activity over the next 5 years. Project LEEF in Lowestoft provides significant opportunities to support the offshore clean energy industry and the development of the East Anglia Offshore Wind (EAOW) array is a major opportunity and when completed, it will be the largest wind farm in the world; Lowestoft is a major hub in relation to it.

Working with partners, work will focus on opportunities including:

Promoting the strengths of the district to stimulate investment, providing a key focus on East Suffolk's key sectors and places

Ensure that businesses locating within East Suffolk are provided access to appropriate support and networks

Visitor Economy and Cultural Sector:

The visitor economy and closely related cultural sector together account for a significant part of the local economy. Whilst these sectors face challenges, the vibrancy of these sectors is what makes East Suffolk a special place to live and work in the area.

East Suffolk has a strong events programme, which has national pull, including the Latitude Festival, the Suffolk Show, First Light Festival and the Aldeburgh Music Festival at Snape. The district also has a strong built heritage including such as Framlingham Castle, Sutton Hoo, and Landguard Fort. East Suffolk has more than 20 museums, 4 castles, more than 200 churches and assets which are significant assets to the visitor economy.

Working with partners, work will focus on opportunities including:

Promotion of local food and drink, harnessing local brands such as Adnams to nurture local supply chains

Working with partners, particularly the Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation to define a "year-round offer

Capitalise on the regeneration opportunities and initiatives currently taking place in Lowestoft (Town's Fund) and Felixstowe

Building upon the strengths of the market towns, to define a visitor economy "offer"

Continued investment in key tourist assets, for example, recent investment into both Lowestoft and Felixstowe seafronts

Local challenges and opportunities: People and Skills

Are there any local challenges you face which fall under the People and Skills investment priority?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: People and Skills

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible:

There are a number of ESF funded projects which have resourced interventions with a focus on improving skills and employment levels in Suffolk. Funding allocations are significantly smaller than equivalent sums leveraged through the European Structural Funds. This presents a clear challenge for Suffolk and East Suffolk, limiting the potential to develop new activity to respond as skills and employment related issues arise (with cost of living and inflation the labour market conditions remain subject to change) and to continue delivery of activity that is fulfilling a clear need and has proven to be impactful. With funding for 'People and Skills' not coming online fully until 2024/25, there is likely to be a hiatus in support – such as 'work and health' programme and 'Work Well Suffolk'.

There are also several VCSE organisations such as Lapwing and Community Action Suffolk currently delivering on 'People and Skills' objectives who are currently in receipt of ESIF funding.

East Suffolk faces a number of challenges around people and skills:

Economically Inactive:

3.7% of the working age population is classed as unemployed and the JSA claimant count in March 2022 was 41.9% in East Suffolk which is below the national average at 60.2%. In addition to this, 3,600 of working people are affected by employment deprivation (9.8%) and a further 15,900 people are affected by income deprivation (11.4%) in East Suffolk (East Suffolk Strategic Plan).

Leiston has seen the largest increase in Universal Credit claims since March 2020 compared to any other East Suffolk town – representing a 105.9% increase. This is followed by Woodbridge at 98.8%, Felixstowe at 92.1%, Beccles at 67.8% and Lowestoft at 36.7% (State of the Group report by Department for Work and Pensions, May 2022).

East Anglia has 25,204 people, aged 16-24 years receiving Universal Credit, with 7,660 of these searching for work. This is compared to 120,663 25-49-year-olds across East Anglia that are receiving Universal Credit, with the largest majority of 35,751 in work. There are a further 39,382 over 50's receiving Universal Credit with the largest group of 13,860 with no work requirements (including those in full time education, caring responsibilities, over state pension age, have a child under 1 and those with no prospect for work).

The parliamentary constituency of Waveney, within East Suffolk, is classified by the DWP as a youth unemployment hotspot within the North and East Midlands area, with a claimant count of 540 of those aged 18-24 in April 2022. For over 50's neither Waveney or Suffolk Coastal are not classed as unemployment hotspots, however, both Waveney and Suffolk Coastal are classed as unemployment hotspots for those aged 18-50, with a total of 2,725 in Waveney (April 2022, 6.4% increase on April 2021) and a further 1,275 in Suffolk Coastal (April 2022, 31.4% increase on April 2021), which make up the East Suffolk parliamentary constituencies.

52.6% of all Employment Support Allowance claimants in the North and East Midlands are due to Mental and Behavioural disorders (DWP North and East Midlands State of the Group Report).

Skill Levels:

Skills levels are generally below required levels, particularly in the north of the district. Lowestoft has recorded the highest rates of 16-64s claiming Universal Credit whilst in employment since Covid-19 began (Suffolk Office of Data Analytics). Furthermore, according to the social mobility index, Waveney is ranked as the 7th worst area in England for social mobility.

Data from 2021 shows that over 5% of East Suffolk's population had no qualifications. The qualification levels in East Suffolk in 2021 are as follows: Qualification level obtained for 2021 East Suffolk population ages 16-64

NVQ4+: 39.4%

NVQ3+: 55.3%

NVQ2+: 76.4%

NVQ1+: 90.7%

Other: 3.8%

None: 5.5%

(Source: Nomis)

Workforce Skills:

Education and skills programmes are not appropriately aligned with the needs of business and routes to employment. 10% of health and social care service businesses had 1 or more skills shortage vacancies in 2019, alongside 7% of business services and 6% of hotels and restaurants.

Public transport infrastructure that links to educational establishments and local employers.

There is a lack of sector specific training academies within East Suffolk's key sectors – including tourism and logistics.

Limited higher education provision with a lack of locally available graduates required for business needs. 33.4% of students at the University of Suffolk study business and management, followed by a further 32% studying business studies and 11% studying social sciences. This shows that there is an opportunity to increase graduate training in other sectors such as ports and logistics and other key sectors. In addition to this, apprenticeships in East Suffolk fell from 430 in 2016 to 299 in 2018. With 29% of all apprenticeships across New Anglia in health, public services and care.

Under 40% of Suffolk's businesses were classified as 'innovation active' by a survey conducted by BEIS in 2021, highlighting the need to increase business skills support on how to be flexible and innovative. Improving innovation will be a key to long term growth of our district.

Voluntary Skills:

East Suffolk has seen decreased engagement from volunteers in local activities and cultural events following the pandemic. A recent report from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport found the number of hours given by volunteers aged between 25 and 34 fell by as much as 50% as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The report also showed a drop in volunteering by those over 65 and an average decrease of 40% in formal volunteering hours.

Local challenges and opportunities: People and Skills

Are there any local opportunities which fall under the People and Skills investment priority that you intend to support?

Yes

Local challenges and opportunities: People and Skills

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible:

The following opportunities have been identified under people and skills for East Suffolk:

Existing Programmes:

There are a number of existing programmes which are being delivered in Suffolk as there are many common challenges which are most effectively and efficiently addressed through a coordinated county-wide approach that can be built upon and tailored for East Suffolk against identified place-based needs. This will help ensure that when it comes to support such as employment support or helping businesses upskill, that availability of support won't be adversely affected and helping funding go as far as possible.

Existing funded activity has been analysed and split across four key priority areas. These areas can help the translation from ESF (and other funding) to SPF and other funding across the next three years. The key areas for skills are:

Participation and Youth Employment:

Taking Suffolk County Council's and other partners work with those aged between 16 and 25 and looking at what will be lost from ESF projects and where impacts could be mitigated from Y1& 2 and support new projects in Y3. Project continuation funding in Y1 & 2 FOR Projects such as YES (Youth Employment Service, Aspire, and 'Minding the Gap (Lapwing) are critical in providing targeted NEET prevention and youth employment provision for those furthest from the labour market.

Long Term Unemployed:

Primarily looking at adding value, enhancing the scale and intensity to the projects including 'Work Well Suffolk' to supported through Multiply Y1 & Y2. Also, opportunity to develop Y3 projects to focus on adult re-engagement, social prescribing and linking into national programmes to provide a consistent and coordinated approach for Suffolk.

Apprenticeship Support:

Three key strands, building on opportunities for all ages through apprenticeship training to help enter or progress within the workforce. Support for employers, in particular non-levy paying and micro and small employers to help them benefit from apprenticeships as a route to recruitment and building a skilled, loyal workforce. Support for apprenticeship levy payers to utilise their levy and if applicable transfer it for use by our local smaller businesses.

Progression into and within the Workforce:

Building on existing work to create programmes focusing on Skills Deals, and training funds to encourage employers to co-finance training for employees bring individual and business benefits.

Other programmes include 'Routes to Work and Skills to Connect', which is currently being run by East Coast College. In addition to this, there are opportunities to build upon the recently launched 'Supply Chain Skills Development Fund', which is supporting local businesses upskill their workforce to allow them to participate in supply chain opportunities.

Support to local businesses to help them upskill employees is being provided across East Suffolk through various partners. This includes the East Suffolk Digital Springboard programme which is a fully formed programme for digital support and upskilling to independent businesses.

Other opportunities include:

Supporting access to education and skills development opportunities that enable local people to access employment and create jobs. Over the next 5 years, East Suffolk has a once in a generation opportunity to create prosperity if/as key initiatives such as Freeport East, Project LEEF/Offshore Clean Energy, Towns Fund developments in Lowestoft and Sizewell C projects progress. It is imperative that these opportunities are harnessed to ensure local people and communities' benefit.

Build upon relationships between academics / educators and businesses to help them communicate with businesses and ensure they can be communicated to local people. Opportunities to develop relationships with specialists at Higher Education providers to support business relevant engagement

According to the New Anglia Skills report, released in March 2021, Norfolk and Suffolk has a comparatively older population base compared to the national average. Internal migration data for the UK reveals the region is a particularly popular destination for those aged 45-65. This presents both challenges and opportunities. This age group bring comparably higher earnings and savings, and hold higher levels of attainment and experience, but over time will place increasing demand on the area's health and social care infrastructure. The demand for those qualified in health and social care or medical-related subjects will have to steadily increase to best support the ageing population.

Further within the New Anglia Skills report, the analysis in both our sector skills plans and more recently in our Local Industrial Strategy has indicated an expected increase in jobs in scientific, engineering and technical disciplines (including ICT digital), especially in relation to the golden thread in the area's LIS, in terms of Norfolk and Suffolk becoming a leading location for clean growth.

University of Suffolk (UoS) was originally established as University Campus Suffolk in 2007 and went on to be awarded university status in 2016, making it one of the newest universities in the UK. It is spread over four campuses with a central hub in Ipswich and further franchised partner campuses located in Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. Health, care and wellbeing is central to UoS's 10-year strategy, and it is working with a wide range of partners to create the UK's first Integrated Care Academy. It will soon be opening the DigiTech Centre located at Adastral Park, BT's global Research and Development centre in Martlesham, near Ipswich. The centre will provide cutting-edge digital skills for people looking to pursue careers in information and communications technology, as well as exploring innovations and research in digital health and smart living.

Norfolk and Suffolk are also home to five Further Education colleges which are passionate about driving the skills agenda and meeting the needs of our population, society and industries. They play an integral part of creating a skills pipeline to meet the current and future skills needs of industry.

Significant research has been undertaken by Norfolk and Suffolk through the Technical Skills Legacy Report which sets out the skill sets required to meet the high levels of infrastructure development planned to take place over the coming years. The report provides data that demonstrates there will be legacy job roles in: Science, Engineering And Tech Professionals, Skilled Metal, Electrical and Electronic Trades, Skilled Construction and Building Trades, Process Plant and Machine Operatives, and Transport and Mobile Machine Drivers and Operatives.

Interventions

Interventions: Communities and Place

Does your investment plan meet the Communities and Place investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: Communities and Place

What are the outcomes you want to deliver under this investment priority? Select all that apply.

Jobs safeguarded, Increased footfall, Increased visitor numbers, Reduced vacancy rates, Greenhouse gas reductions, Improved perceived/experienced accessibility, Improved perception of facilities/amenities, Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support, Improved perception of events

Interventions: Communities and Place

Select the interventions you intend to use which meet this priority. You can select as many as you like.

E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs., E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities. , E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.

Interventions: Communities and Place

Do you plan to use any interventions not included on this list?

No

Interventions: Communities and Place

Have you already identified any projects which fall under the Communities and Place investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: Communities and Place

Describe these projects, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.

Describe these projects, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.:

The following provisional programmes will be made available across all of our principle 12 towns and villages. These are:

Lowestoft

Felixstowe

Beccles

Bungay

Halesworth

Leiston

Saxmundham

Woodbridge

Framlingham

Aldeburgh

Southwold

Wickham Market

East Suffolk High Street Improvement Programme:

Building on East Suffolk Towns Revitalisation Programme Phase-1, East Suffolk Council will internally deliver a three-year programme that will offer grants to improve high streets and town centres across the district. Organisations, will be able to apply for grants within the following provisional thematic areas and ESC will commission certain aspects of delivery within these themes:

Year's 1&2:

Town accessibility for those with disabilities and impairments

Culture, arts and heritage enrichments and activities

Improve the visitor offer in towns

Developing cultural events programme to increase town centre footfall

To create visually stimulating and attractive town centres that capitalise on their individual character and assets to enhance their visitor experience through streetscape and public realm improvements

Enhancing pedestrian movement through wayfinding and signage improvements between key areas of the town resulting in an increased footfall to the benefit of all businesses

Strengthening the towns digital presence and connectivity

Exploring opportunities for event development and sustainability linked to the Towns Celebrations concept

Enhancements to and within town centres as well as options for improved access by foot and bicycle to the town centre and pedestrian 'space' in the centres.

In addition to town organisations, cultural, heritage, art and leisure institutions will also be able to apply for grants.

Year 3:

Grant programme focusing on enhancing shopfronts in town centres and high streets

Grants will be eligible for:

Replacement shop front, windows and doors

Reinstatement of traditionally styled shop fronts, sash windows and doors

Painting of existing shop fronts and upper floors (including render)

Replacement gutter and downpipes

Replacement signage

Internal security grilles

Costs associated with planning permission and building regulations fees

Architects' fees

This programme meets the Communities and Place investment priority by strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities, such as community infrastructure and local green space, and community-led projects.

The investment will look to improve sustainability within town centres by building quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in, through targeted improvements to the built environment and innovative approaches to town centres. The overall programme will aim to reconnect local residents to the hubs of their communities.

The programme will be key in supporting us to diversify our visitor economy offer and sustainable our destination towns and places which are vital to our local economy.

Using place to strengthen our local social fabric to support the cost-of-living crisis:

This programme will consist of two key interventions, delivered within town centres and rural communities. Data shows that East Suffolk has high levels of deprivation and social isolation which leads to social mobility challenges. The cost-of-living crisis will exacerbate this further resulting in vulnerable members of our community not being able to afford the basics such as food and heating. The programme is being match-funded by a wider cost-of-living programme supported by the East Suffolk Community Partnership that will address wider need and connect up supporting services. This intervention will closely align with the high street improvement programme, which will improve the high street experience, and further develop this by reconnecting our hardest to reach communities to their local high streets. The programme has the long term aim of improving social enrichment, access to services and reducing the barriers to services and ultimately reducing social isolation. However, the short-term objective is to combat fuel poverty and address immediate cost-of-living impacts.

The key two projects are:

East Suffolk Community Food Network:

The project will seek to unite communities and food producers and wholesalers, to address the cost-of-living crisis as well as reduce food waste, increase local awareness of shopping and buying local produce and benefits of healthy nutritious meals.

The project will look to achieve the following:

Establish a diverse range of sustainable settings for the local community to access cheap, wholesome food, including Your Local Pantries and Community Fridges/Freezers

Increase the supply of fresh, local (and useful other) produce to Community Pantries and Community Fridges as well as existing Food Banks

Promote the food production sector in East Suffolk and link the sector more closely to sustainable food projects

Deliver food sector-specific skills training to disadvantaged groups

Reduce social isolation and loneliness

Drive increased footfall into town centres

Creating a network of Your Local Pantries and Community Fridges:

The number of community pantries and fridges will be significantly increased to give hard-pressed communities access to discounted, wholesome food. The pantry model is more sustainable than food banks as local residents are members and pay a small weekly fee (usually around £3.50) for a number of food items as well as being able to access other donated food items. The pantries will also host free-to-access internet-enabled tablets to help people access a range of additional beneficial services as part of the wider East Suffolk 'Ease the Squeeze' cost of living programme, including access to skills packages. As the majority of pantries will be located in town centres, this will also increase footfall and reconnect people with town centres for when they are ready to spend.

Creating a network of food producers and retailers who will provide excess stock to Community Pantries/Fridges and Food Banks. This will include supermarkets and large producers but, more importantly, will also incorporate small, independent retailers and producers who can donate unsold food on a daily basis. These smaller retailers and producers will then automatically become part of a local Food Heroes scheme where their involvement in the wider initiative to 'Ease the Squeeze' – as well as their complete food offer – will be promoted to local residents, driving increased awareness and sales and enabling them to achieve their CSR ambitions.

Food to Fork projects:

Providing support to enable the development of a wide range of new/repurposed community allotments, gardens, window boxes and planters, with organic accreditation sought where possible. The food produced will be:

Used by the people who've been supported to grow it to reduce their food costs and boost their health

Provided at little or no cost to Community Pantries, Fridges and Food banks to help address the rising cost of food for communities

Sold in pop up shops in a town centre locations to generate awareness of the project and drive revenue to be reinvested in the project

Sold to local hospitality venues who also become part of the Food Heroes scheme (as above)

Supporting people and communities to grow their own food will also provide them with hands-on, practical skills, and will reduce social isolation and loneliness by bringing people together, often from different generations, to work on shared projects. These initial skills can be built on with pathways into additional courses linked to food production and processing. And, hyper-locally produced food will reduce carbon emissions.

Selling the food produced in pop up shops in town centres will drive increased footfall and play a part in reimagining town centres as community spaces. Business support will also be offered to local producers through our UKSPF business support and skills programmes.

Cooking on a budget (and beyond) classes:

These classes will show people how to cook healthy, balanced nutritious meals on a budget. They will use the fresh produce from community allotments and gardens. They will be run by the voluntary sector but will also include professional chefs as volunteers from local hospitality venues. The hospitality venues involved will also become part of the Food Heroes scheme and will be promoted to local residents.

Learning basic cooking skills creates a pathway into further training and entrepreneurship. Participants can progress through to more advanced catering courses and can access support to create their own local food business. A mentor scheme using volunteers from East Suffolk's numerous successful family food businesses will provide key skills and encourage passion for creating the next generation of local food businesses.

Warm Rooms:

Create a network of warm rooms where people struggling to pay their home energy bills can come to get warm, reduce their home energy spend, connect with others and access a range of additional support and advice services and skills development opportunities that will provide benefit to them for the longer term.

Using existing community spaces and utilising available town centre spaces, a network of heated rooms will be created and run by volunteers in local communities. They will be available to access at no cost to residents and will provide a range of benefits:

Free wifi

Free-to-access internet-enabled tablets which will reduce digital exclusion. Existing digital champions will be available to help people safely enjoy the benefits of the digital world.

Regular visits by a range of providers who will leverage the attention of the attendees to offer and explain courses, services and support that can enhance their lives. This will include:

The East Suffolk Financial Inclusion team, who can offer tailored advice to help people manage their finances more effectively

Skills providers who can design pathways into training, education and employment

Mentors, co-ordinated through a new volunteer programme, who will work one-to-one with attendees to understand their needs and build personalised support programmes specifically designed to help people out of the cost-of-living crisis long term

Information regarding other Ease the Squeeze cost of living support programmes

The chance to connect to other people and reduce social isolation and loneliness

While the need for access to heated spaces is a clear, present need, the Warm Rooms initiative will drive benefits beyond meeting that need. They represent a good opportunity to create enduring relationships with communities, who we can support over time with the range of services described above, which have the potential to improve their lives for the long term.

Equally, locating Warm Rooms primarily in town centres will attract hard to reach communities, members of the community who have never had to ask for support before and volunteers into town centres and play its part in recreating town centres as community hubs, driving longer term engagement and increased spend when people's financial situations improve.

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

Yes

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed project constitute a subsidy/State Aid and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.:

The projects detailed above are still being designed and where grants are involved, the project / programme will be considered and assessed to determine whether the project constitutes a subsidy to recipients. If a project is deemed a subsidy, it will be assessed under the Subsidy Control principles for compliance. Work will be supported by East Suffolk Council's Legal Team.

Under the East Suffolk high street improvement programme, there may be some subsidy to local cultural, arts and heritage organisations / businesses and the application process will manage this aspect requiring applicants to confirm grants received within a 3-year period if applicable.

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Does your investment plan meet the Supporting Local Business investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

What are the outcomes you want to deliver under this investment priority? Select all that apply.

Jobs created, Jobs safeguarded, Number of new businesses created, Increased business sustainability, Increased number of businesses supported, Increased amount of investment, Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity, Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes, Greenhouse gas reductions, Number of businesses with improved productivity, Number of businesses engaged in new markets

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Select the interventions you intend to use which meet this priority. You can select as many as you like.

E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks. , E24: Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, 'incubators' and 'accelerators' for local enterprise (including social enterprise) which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services including account management, advice, resources, training, coaching, mentorship and access to

workspace. , E29: Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. Taking a whole systems approach to invest in infrastructure to deliver effective decarbonisation across energy, buildings and transport and beyond, in line with our legally binding climate target. Maximising existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity. , E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth, particularly in areas of higher unemployment.

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Do you plan to use any interventions not included on this list?

No

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Have you already identified any projects which fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: Supporting Local Business

Describe these projects, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.

Describe these projects, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.:

Suffolk wide business support programme:

Suffolk Local Authorities have recognised the benefits and the economies of scale that can be achieved through a collaborative business support programme. The county has significant experience of collaborating and delivering on EU skills and business programmes.

Lead local authorities and key partners have worked up proposals for pooling UKSPF funding in these priority areas, which have been supported in principle by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group (Chief Executives of Suffolk Local Authorities).

At this stage, whilst existing delivery partners for business support and skills initiatives have been consulted over the types of programmes that could be run across the county, in particular, extending / continuing ERDF funded projects, further work is needed to scope out the procurement / commissioning process.

The pooled contributions could be used to deliver the following examples of similar initiatives due to the success of these programmes to date:

Growth Hub with scale-up programme:

A team of business advisors who provide free, fully funded, impartial support and advice for businesses who have been trading for over 12 months.

Targeted support through one-to-one engagement proactively engaging companies who would benefit from support in high level innovation, productivity programmes, supply chain development and scale up –with on-going long-term engagement

Provide one to many support, open to all businesses, through a range of events which provide advice on topics all businesses need e.g. net zero, low level innovation, workforce progression, health and wellbeing.

Signposting to wider local and national business support interventions including financial programmes.

Funding for a 21 month programme starting July 2023 and running to March 2025

Small Grants Scheme:

Grants from £1,000 to £10,000 to support business growth whether it's to investing R&D or innovation projects and projects that deliver carbon reductions resulting in improved productivity.

Consultancy Support:

Running from April 2023 - March 2025, funded support for businesses to access and work with a consultancy and start the process of reducing their carbon footprint and working towards net zero through development of action plans or to receive specialist support to help develop further innovation plans.

Connected Innovation:

Drives collaboration between innovation hubs and clusters, with a focus around cross sector innovation, business support and addressing key agendas such as clean growth across Suffolk and Norfolk leading to new innovative activity.

Supports the formation of joint ventures, with the aim to secure innovation investment which in the past has been low.

It currently brings together 16 Innovation centres from across Norfolk and Suffolk enabling collaboration and knowledge transfer. There is opportunity to grow the network.

Challenge led events will be delivered which bring together business, academia and national agencies e.g. Catapults, to consider a challenge and identify solutions

Start-up Programme:

'How to Start a Business' training packages are designed for both new enterprises and those seeking self-employment across Suffolk.

Delivered via a blend of support including, workshops (delivered virtually via Zoom), 1-2-1 sessions & self-led learning, the training is comprehensive, focused and above all completely free of charge to the business.

Starting a business from scratch or transferring your skills to become self-employed, a freelancer or sole trader.

This programme falls under the Supporting Local Business investment priority by ensuring there is a consistent service of business support for local businesses. The programme will create jobs through investments that build on existing industries and institutions through a well-established business support and grant programme.

East Suffolk Small Business Move to Net Zero Grant Scheme:

During 2021, East Suffolk Council ran a 'Plan for the Future' grant scheme as part of their Covid-19 recovery schemes. One of the noticeable sectors that were successful with grant applications were from the visitor economy and there was a clear drive to make net zero adaptations to their businesses to make them more sustainable and efficient. In addition to this, in the recent New Anglia LEP small business net zero grant programme, which has now closed, the interest from East Suffolk businesses exceeded the grant allocation and this has been further demonstrated through our East Suffolk UKSPF prioritisation survey work.

Further to this, East Suffolk Council has recently completed new Economic Strategy and Visitor Economy Strategy which has further highlighted the ambition to transition to a net zero economy. East Suffolk Council also recognises the opportunity to work towards a carbon net zero East Suffolk visitor economy.

East Suffolk Council are aware that there are other business grant schemes that come and go and we want to ensure there is a small business grant scheme that all sectors can access that can help them make net zero adaptations. The programme we are proposing will provide additionality to the Suffolk wide net zero consultancy scheme.

East Suffolk Council will consider at the time who is best to deliver the programme, whether this is by a procured provider or in-house due to previous experience.

The proposed small grant scheme will range between grants of £1,000 - £5,000 with a provisional intervention rate of 20%. The grants will be aimed at small businesses with ambitions to reduce their carbon footprint and increase productivity. The scheme will fund the following interventions (as examples):

Capital investments in small adaptations to businesses

Energy efficiency improvements

Changing to a low carbon heating system

Installation of low and zero carbon generating technologies, such as solar PV, biomass or micro-wind

Building fabric upgrades such as insulation, energy efficient lighting and draught-proofing

Purchase of equipment to allow new operating processes, such as a move to digital services, optimisation of resources or enhanced waste management

LED lighting

Energy efficient plant and machinery

Insulation, replacement windows, doors etc. to improve energy efficiency of buildings

Heating e.g., Biomass, ASHP/WSHP etc. but not fossil fuel alternatives

Electric commercial vehicles

Solar Panels (building regs and planning permission may apply)

Creation or enhancement of decarbonisation plans

Further specialist consultancy

Whilst open to all businesses, specific targeting of businesses associated with the visitor economy, retail and hospitality and other sectors that have been previously exempt from similar grant schemes will be encouraged.

The East Suffolk Council Strategic Plan pledges to become a carbon neutral council by 2030, which means environmental benefit(s) are a key consideration. Within the pledge is an outcome to encourage and invest in renewable energy and supporting businesses to care for the environment. The Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy also acknowledges the urgent need to accelerate the economy's transition meeting global, national and regional climate ambitions in order to drive sustainable change within businesses of all sizes.

This programme will meet the needs of the investment priority by supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. It will also maximise existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity. It will also support the development of a carbon net zero East Suffolk visitor economy.

East Suffolk Capital Business and Workforce Skills Grant Programme:

Provisional programme involving direct delivery / grant programme for communities, education providers and business centres (including those owned by East Suffolk Council) that have training spaces that need to be upgraded in line with local skills needs. In order to identify the local skills needs, consultation and further data analysis will be undertaken during the development of the programme specification by East Suffolk Council.

Grants will be between a minimum of £5,000 up to a maximum of £25,000, with a provisional intervention rate of 20% of the cost of the development. However, civil society groups could apply for an intervention rate of up to 50% if suitable evidence is provided and outputs can be achieved.

It is anticipated that grants will be for items such as:

Digital equipment

Upgrading equipment

Modernising facilities

Sector specific needs and technologies

Improved community training facilities and accessibility

Energy efficiency adaptations

The programme will meet the Supporting Local Business investment priority by providing critical and much needed funding for improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, 'incubators' and 'accelerators' for local enterprise within East Suffolk. Many local training facilities have lacked investment for many years and are out-dated and require investment to keep up with modern technology and expected requirements of local businesses to attract greater use and become key facilities for our local business community. The programme will also provide vital investment in digital infrastructure for local community facilities and further enhance support for basic digital skills to our local communities and residents.

This capital programme will take place in year-3 only and will link closely with the wider skills programme outlined within the people and skills section.

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

Yes

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed project constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.:

Subsidy Control will be a key consideration in the design and management of the projects outlined above. The Suffolk-wide business support programme will retain and build upon the former State Aid principles which have been followed under ERDF but updated to align to Subsidy Control principles.

With grants directly delivered by East Suffolk Council, the programmes will be assessed under the Subsidy Control principles and will be managed through the implemented application process.

This will involve requiring applicants to confirm the number and value of external grants and rate they have been in receipt of over the last 3 years. It is likely that aid will be managed under the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance provision.

Interventions: People and Skills

Does your investment plan meet the People and Skills investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: People and Skills

What are the outcomes you want to deliver under this investment priority? Select all that apply.

Number of economically inactive individuals in receipt of benefits they are entitled to following support, Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support, Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF, Number of people in supported employment, Number of people with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL), Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services, Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support, Number of people engaged in job-searching following support, Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services, Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months, Number of people in education/training, Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision, Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support, Number of economically active individuals engaged in mainstream skills education and training

Interventions: People and Skills

Select the interventions you intend to use which meet this priority. Select all that apply.

E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps. This provision can include project promoting the importance of work to help people to live healthier and more independent lives, alongside building future financial resilience and wellbeing. Beyond that, this intervention will also contribute to building community cohesion and facilitate greater shared civil pride, leading to better integration for those benefitting from ESOL support. Expected cohorts include, but are not limited to people aged over 50, people with a disability and health condition, women, people from an ethnic minority, young people not in education, employment or training and people with multiple complex needs (homeless, care leavers, ex/offenders, people with substance abuse problems and victims of domestic violence). *via Multiply., E34: Courses including basic skills (digital, English, maths (via Multiply) and ESOL), and life skills and career skills** provision for people who are unable to access training through the adult education budget or wrap around support detailed above. Supplemented by financial support for learners to enrol onto courses and complete qualifications. Beyond that, this intervention will also contribute to building community cohesion and facilitate greater shared civil pride, leading to better integration for those benefitting from ESOL support. **where not being met through Department for Work and Pensions provision., E38: Support for local areas to fund local skills needs. This includes technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to level 2 and training for vocational licences relevant to local area needs and high-value qualifications where there is a need for additional skills capacity that are not being met through other provision.

Interventions: People and Skills

Do you plan to use any interventions not included on this list?

No

Interventions: People and Skills

Have you already identified any projects for 2024-2025 which fall under the People and Skills investment priority?

Yes

Interventions: People and Skills

Describe these projects for 2024-25, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.

Describe these projects for 2024-25, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.:

Suffolk wide skills programme:

As with the Suffolk wide business support programme, Suffolk Local Authorities have recognised the benefits and the economies of scale that can be achieved through a collaborative skills programme. The county has significant experience of collaborating and delivering ESF funded skills programmes.

The pooled contributions would be used to deliver activity across four areas of intervention:

Youth Participation / Employment:

The aim of this programme will be to provide a county wide youth participation and employment offer. Suffolk County Council (SCC) and other partners work with those aged between 16 and 25.

Although the ratios of those in employment, education or training appears relatively healthy we are seeing an increase in actual numbers of those young people across Suffolk requiring support to prevent them becoming NEET (Not in employment, education or training) or as a result of becoming NEET. The total cohort size for whom we have a statutory obligation to track destinations, has increased 11% since March 2019 and is now 15,733, we have many more young people who are NEET (23% increase in actual numbers), more young people with complex needs or SEND and many more young people going into employment without training at 16.

Adult unemployment:

The overall aim of this programme is to provide additional support - delivered through the Multiply 'employment support' model – dedicated to specific district and borough priorities e.g. support for a particular demographic to move them closer and into work or focus on progression and retention in a certain sector or business cluster.

Relatively low productivity and wages coupled with an ageing population and a rising demand for related services means there is a real need in Suffolk to support all those who can work to move into employment. The past two years has seen rising rates of working age people with health conditions who are outside the labour market (over 10% increase nationally to 2.2million). Of those who are economically inactive, a higher proportion of those in Suffolk are considered long-term sick (27.5%) than the national average (24.6%).

The future of the Work Well Suffolk service – or plans for a replacement - is of pressing concern due to upcoming end of funding. WWS is funded through the European Social Fund up to December 2022. The project looks to address deep seated barriers to work that result in long-term unemployment by working between and integrating the local health, employment, and skills systems. It directly supports some of our most vulnerable residents including those aged 18+ with mental health and musculoskeletal conditions as well as those with learning disabilities to ensure that individuals can gain timely access to relevant therapeutic services, blending in employability support and advice. It receives referrals from the health service through social prescribing, from ACS and DWP among others and helps participants gain basic skills and competencies, preparing them for a job search and, if possible, into employment or self-employment.

A team of geographically placed Navigators, covering the whole county between them, work with referring agencies such as DWP, Social Prescribing, Suffolk Mind, Leading Lives, ACS, CYP and Learning Disability and Autism providers to enrol participants onto the project for support in employability, further education, and training, gaining basic skills and supporting to get closer to being 'job ready'

To date WWS has supported almost 1750 unemployed or economically inactive participants from across Suffolk, this number includes many over 50's, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and single parents with childcare needs. So far 370 participants have gone into sustainable employment and 37 have gone into self-employment (considering we are dealing with those in the 'high need' these are positive outcomes). The retention rate of participants on the project is high (87%) and feedback from participants, referring organisations and delivery partners indicates that this is a high quality and valued service that supports people as individuals including those with a learning disability or Autism. It has become a key part as to how this cohort of residents in Suffolk are offered support.

The project is currently delivered through a combination of direct Suffolk County Council delivery and delivery through the project partners, Realise Futures, Menta and Steadfast Training.

Apprenticeship Support:

The aim will be to provide an 'Apprenticeships Suffolk' offer that looks to drive up the creation and uptake of apprenticeships in line with a focus on enhancing both social mobility and economic growth.

Apprenticeships can provide a vital contribution to providing the talent needed to take the county forward, giving individuals opportunities to progress and raising levels of social mobility across communities. Unfortunately, the number of apprenticeship starts in Suffolk is recovering at a slower rate than the national average (Suffolk has a decline of -7% when comparing Q2 data to pre-pandemic Q2 2019-20, whilst national starts are exceeding pre-pandemic numbers by 3%). Of particular concern is the level of intermediate starts for those in younger age groups.

Apprenticeships Suffolk is an impartial and completely free service being offered by Suffolk County Council as part of their strategic aim to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships within the county, thereby supporting business and economic growth.

This core component of the 'Apprenticeships Suffolk' service offers support to employers, providers and potential apprentices throughout the process of creating an apprenticeship, thereby addressing one of the key challenges acknowledged by Government to increasing apprenticeship numbers (complexity of system, causes confusion and demotivates both employers and potential apprentices). To date the service has engaged with 224 employers, creating over 120 additional apprenticeship opportunities, and supporting 115 individuals into alternative education, employment and training since September 2020.

Workforce Development:

The aim of this programme will be to support the development, delivery and uptake of training that will develop talent within the local workforce to address skills gaps, foster growth and innovation where it is needed to meet our strategic ambitions (e.g. Net Zero) and ensure that Suffolk residents and businesses are ready to benefit from growth and development in the area.

Increasing levels of innovation and growth in our economy is dependent on developing competencies and skills within our current workforce as well as those entering work for the first time. The pandemic has also seen a large increase in those on benefits in work in Suffolk (at one point this had risen by over 100%). If we are therefore to support individuals to progress in work to levels at which benefits are no longer needed and upwards into roles that then drive progress towards our strategic ambitions, including net zero then we need to ensure that relevant training is available and accessible and encourage take-up and investment. This will also help us capitalise on key opportunities such as SZC and Freeport East – ensuring that skillsets are in place to help our local SMEs, and by extension, our local residents, to benefit.

Skills Deals the Skills Deal programme was funded by ESFA (underspent AEB) and matched by public sector and private co-investment for employers. This project worked with employer/provider partnerships to support sectoral development and create new and innovative training designed by the partnership to meet the needs of the employer and the wider sector. This project offers flexibility in delivery to tailor for industry/sector and locality and provided benefits to participants and a legacy through new training curriculum and funding facilities and resources. Skills Deals Phase 2 ended 31st

March 2022.

SCSDF was created in response to, and in advance of, the unprecedented levels of investment and development due to take place across the region including more than 11 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), the 'SCSDF' project helps equip local SMEs with the workforce capabilities needed to be part of some of the supply chains of key infrastructure development and inward investment opportunities in Norfolk and Suffolk as well as respond to changing requirements such as climate adaptation and mitigation.

Pathways Training Fund supports SME employers not eligible for SCSDF in 5 key areas of training, other than ESF eligibility PTF offers flexibility to the employer as to what training they wish to purchase and then reimburses up to 75% of the cost.

The Suffolk wide programme of activity falls under the People and Skills investment priority with the overall programme seeking to address several of the interventions under this priority, including supporting economically inactive people through intensive and wrap-around support, increasing basic skills, supporting those in employment and meeting local skills needs. The programme addresses gaps in local skills provision, provides stepping stones to innovation for businesses through workforce upskilling and supports those furthest from the labour market to overcome barriers to work.

This programme of activity is well established in Suffolk, with proven outputs and outcomes, and without funding from UKSPF there is a risk of losing this valuable Suffolk wide programme due to the loss of EU funding.

East Suffolk Local economy led skills and community skills programme:

During year-2 of UKSPF, East Suffolk Council will carry out a review of the skills needs and requirements to fully determine the programme for year-3, however we envisage the programme will need to address:

Longer term impacts of the pandemic and economic change

Recruitment issues and skills shortages

Net zero and decarbonisation skills

Projects could include within this programme:

Life skills development that are transferable to workforce skills

Mentoring and coaching throughout all phases of pre-work

Preparing for the workplace or pre-apprenticeship skills, e.g. volunteering, enrichment and work placements opportunities

Retraining for net-zero associated skills needs

Training for business on how to grow their own staff and sell their business to improve recruitment

Very localised skills shortages – specific training and / or on-the-job training

These themes above were key issues that came out of the East Suffolk UKSPF prioritisation survey and based on the data that shows skills need and where provision is lacking.

This programme would be all inclusive and would cover all economically active age groups, including young people and those over 50.

Both the local capital skills and business grant programme, within the Supporting Local Business intervention, and the local economy led skills and community skill programme will ensure connectivity with the county wide skills programme and link back wherever possible.

By having flexibility within this programme and refining it as the skills needs in year-3 come more apparent, it will allow East Suffolk Council to be responsive to the need and proactively support local funding gaps in provision and provide innovative and supplementary provision to the existing core skills programme within East Suffolk.

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

Yes

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy/State Aid and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted. :

Subsidy Control will be a key consideration in the design and management of the projects outlined above. The Suffolk-wide skills programme will retain and build upon the former State Aid principles which have been followed under ESF but updated to align to Subsidy Control principles.

In grants directly delivered by East Suffolk Council, the programmes will be assessed under the Subsidy Control principles and will be managed through

the implemented application process.

This will involve requiring applicants to confirm the number and value of external grants and rate they have been in receipt of over the last 3 years. It is likely that aid will be managed under the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance provision

Interventions: People and Skills

Have you identified a local voluntary and community provision at risk as part of this intervention?

Yes

Interventions: People and Skills

Describe the local voluntary and community provision at risk and your rationale for supporting it.

Describe the local voluntary provision at risk and your rationale for supporting it. :

In order to support youth participation and employment within East Suffolk, Minding the Gap (currently provided by Lapwing – voluntary provision) currently provide ESF funded participation support for those furthest from the labour market.

Minding the Gap provides support to individuals referred in by the Suffolk County Council 'Early Help Coaches' and 'Young Person Workers' and helping our most vulnerable to transition through into education, employment and training. They are being increasingly relied on to play an integral role, with caseloads forecast to increase even further maintaining the supplementary support that projects such as Minding the Gap provide is vital if we are to make support available to those that need it and avoid a significant rise in levels of NEET young people.

As ESF winds down to bridge the gap between statutory provision and added value for young people right up to 25 years old, funding to support Minding the Gap is required. Minding the Gap is delivered in partnership with Lapwing, who have confirmed they are seeking new sources of funding post ESF. The Minding the Gap project closes to new referrals on 30 Sep 2022 and delivery partners will cease working with any remaining active participants by 25th Feb 2023.

Loss of this service will leave a significant gap in targeted NEET prevention and youth employment provision across the county for those furthest from the labour market. While unemployment nationally, including youth unemployment, is not currently viewed as a major issue politically, it is important to note that unemployment among disadvantaged groups (care leavers, ethnic minority groups, those with SEND, young offenders, etc.) remains a significant problem for 16-25 year olds.

Provide the European Social Fund Project Name(s) and Project Reference(s) for this voluntary and community provision at risk

Provide the European Social Fund Project Name(s) and Project Reference(s) for this voluntary and community provision at risk:

ESF Project ID: 10293013 / outline ref is NEAN/2/4

Interventions: People and Skills

When do you intend to fund these projects? Select all that apply.

2022-2023, 2023-2024

Interventions: People and Skills

Describe these projects for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.

Describe these projects for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, including their proposed locations and how they fall under this investment priority.:

During 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, East Suffolk Council will be pooling funds on a Suffolk wide basis with all other districts and boroughs in Suffolk to continue funding the Minding the Gap service to ensure that participation support for young people furthest from the labour market continues. This is further building on the Suffolk wide skills programme, however all outputs and outcomes from both the Suffolk wide skills programme and the voluntary projects will be proportioned per district according to population size.

Minding the Gap provides support to individuals referred in by the Suffolk County Council 'Early Help Coaches' and 'Young Person Workers' and helping our most vulnerable to transition through into education, employment and training. They are being increasingly relied on to play an integral role, with caseloads forecast to increase even further maintaining the supplementary support that projects such as Minding the Gap provide is vital if we are to make support available to those that need it and avoid a significant rise in levels of NEET young people.

A procurement / commissioning process will be undertaken by East Suffolk Council in partnership with Suffolk local Authorities to find the most suitable voluntary provider to continue this service.

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted. :

The service will be procured.

Approach to delivery and governance

Stakeholder engagement and support

Have you engaged with any of the following as part of your investment plan? Select all that apply.

Public sector organisations, Private sector organisations, Civil society organisations

If so, describe how you have engaged with these organisations. Give examples where possible.

If so, describe how you have engaged with these organisations. Give examples where possible. :

East Suffolk Council designed and undertook a stakeholder engagement survey to gain the opinions of key stakeholders on what the key priorities should be in East Suffolk to help shape this UKSPF investment plan. The survey allowed respondents to add any specific projects or initiatives that they would like to see funded. The survey was sent to approximately 100 organisations, which included public sector, private sector and civil society / voluntary groups. The organisations included:

East of England Economic Development Leads Network

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

Suffolk Chamber of Commerce

3x local MPs

EDF

Hutchinson Ports

ABP

BT

Scottish Power Renewables

East Suffolk Community Partnership Chairs

Lowestoft Place Board members

Department for Work and Pensions

Community Action Suffolk

2x CCG's

Federation of Small Business

MENTA

NWES

Princes Trust

Suffolk New College

East Coast College

The Suffolk Coast DMO

Lowestoft Vision

Felixstowe BID

Access Community Trust

Suffolk Community Foundation

Local Police representative

Larger business associations

Town Councils

Inspire Suffolk

Lowestoft Rising

Orwell Housing

Flagship

Local Cultural Education partnerships

Snape Maltings

Marina Theatre

Asset Management - ESC internal team

First Light Festival

Parking and Infrastructure Team – ESC internal team

Sutton Hoo

Jayne Knight – Suffolk Arts Manager

Suffolk County Council Active Travel Team

Leading Lives

Involve

Volunteering Matters

Leisure Team – ESC internal team

East Suffolk NAAME

Innovation Labs

EEEEGR

Orbis Energy Centre

Headteachers High School group

Adnams PLC

Notcutts

Hoseasons

Herrco Cosmetics Limited

Suffolk County Council

NALEP Growth Hub

Suffolk Growth Partnership

DTI

Steadfast Training

Shaw Trust

Realise Futures

Seetec

Moore Networking

SALC

Suffolk Libraries

M&H Plastics

Micropress

Two Magpies

Birds Eye

Stoke Sauces

Africa Alive

Pleasurewood Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Hotel Folk

We Are Radikil

Lowestoft Cultural Hub network / Leadership network

Local chamber of commerce's

Seagull Theatre

CEFAS

The survey opened on Friday, 10 June 2022 and ran for just over 2-weeks, closing at midnight on Sunday, 26 June 2022.

In total 63 responses were received which have been disseminated to help inform this investment plan. The information received back showed clear alignment to local data and East Suffolk Council's / other local and regional strategic priorities.. Below are high-level results the stakeholder survey.

Communities and Place:

Top priorities from the survey:

Cost-of-living

Town centre and high streets

Community and neighbourhood infrastructure

Supporting Local Business:

Top priorities from the survey:

Town centre and high street improvements

Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy

Business support for social enterprises, communities and business cooperatives

Access to business support at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks

People and Skills:

Top priorities from the survey identified:

Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps.

Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.

Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.

In addition to the local survey, a Suffolk wide survey was undertaken by Suffolk County Council to identify county wide priorities for joint programmes under business support and skills. The survey received 14 responses, with the following results:

Communities and Place

Within the Suffolk wide survey, the top priorities were:

Community measures to reduce the cost of living

Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets

Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration.

Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.

Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups

Supporting Local Business

Within the Suffolk wide survey, the top priorities were:

Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, 'incubators' and 'accelerators' for local enterprise (including social enterprise) which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services including account management, advice, resources, training, coaching, mentorship and access to workspace.

Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. Taking a whole systems approach to invest in infrastructure to deliver effective decarbonisation across energy, buildings and transport and beyond, in line with our legally binding climate target. Maximising existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity.

Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks.

Investment in open markets and improvements to town centre retail and service sector infrastructure, with wrap around support for small businesses.

People and Skills

Within the Suffolk wide survey the top priorities were:

Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.

Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps.

Support for local areas to fund local skills needs. This includes technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to level 2 and training for vocational licences relevant to local area needs and high-value qualifications where there is a need for additional skills capacity that cannot be met through mainstream funding.

Stakeholder engagement and support

Summarise the governance structures you have in place, including how any advisory panels or associated partnership groups are made up.

Summarise the governance structures you have in place, including how any advisory panels or associated partnership groups are made up.:

East Suffolk Council will establish a Local Partnership Stakeholder Group that will act as an advisory and sounding group on project development, with a particular focus on year-3 skills programme development as we assess the local economic landscape. This group will build on the East Suffolk Community Partnership Board already in existence and will include representatives from:

East Suffolk Council

Community Action Suffolk

Suffolk Police

Suffolk Greenprint Forum

EDF

Police Crime Commissioner

BT

Suffolk County Council

Suffolk Community Foundation

Britten Pears Arts

Suffolk Association of Local Councils

Health organisations

East Suffolk Community Partnership Chairs x 8

Suffolk Chamber of Commerce

Menta

NWES

East Coast College

JCP/ DWP

Local Enterprise Partnership

Dr Dan Poulter MP

Dr Thérèse Coffey MP

Peter Aldous MP

In addition to this, East Suffolk Council will continue to host priority theme working groups that will develop and manage approved projects. To ensure coordination of these working groups, Nick Khan (East Suffolk Strategic Director) will provide Senior Management Team leadership, Paul Wood (Head of Service for Economic Development and Regeneration) and Nicole Rickard (Head of Service for Communities) through an internal delivery group, Kay Bonning-Schmitt (Economic Development Project Officer) providing the programme management function. The working groups include:

Communities and Place working group:

Marie Webster-Fitch: Economic Development Manager

Kay Bonning-Schmitt: Economic Development Project Officer

Joanne Chapman: Economic Development Place Based Lead

Alex Heys: Communities Manager

Plus, a private and voluntary sector sub-group as and when required

Supporting Local Business working group:

Marie Webster-Fitch: Economic Development Manager

Kay Bonning-Schmitt: Economic Development Project Officer

Morag McInnes: Economic Development Business and Enterprise Lead

Simon Charlesworth: Economic Development Sector Development and Trade Lead

Plus, a private sector sub-group as and when required

People and Skills working group:

Marie Webster-Fitch: Economic Development Manager

Kay Bonning-Schmitt: Economic Development Project Officer

Simon Charlesworth: Economic Development Sector Development and Trade Lead

James Chandler: Economic Development Skills and Inward Investment Lead

Sam Kenward: Communities Officer

Have all the MPs covering your lead authority been invited to join the local partnership group?

Yes

Stakeholder engagement and support

Are there MPs who are not supportive of your investment plan?

No

Project selection

Are you intending to select projects in any way other than by competition for funding?

Yes

Project selection

Describe your approach to selecting projects, and why you intend to do it this way

Describe your approach to selecting projects, and why you intend to do it this way. :

During year-1 of the UKSPF, 2022 – 2023, under the Communities and Place investment priority the East Suffolk High Street Improvement Programme will be selected predominantly through competition for funding. This is due to grants that will be internally delivered directly to applicants including local business associations, BIDs, town councils, town groups and organisations, community groups and cultural, arts and heritage organisations. This is following learning from the Welcome Back Fund and the East Suffolk Towns Revitalisation Programme Phase-1 which involved the distribution of grants to great success, highlighting the need to continue funding for events, culture, arts and town centre improvements to enhance the visitor experience. In addition to this, the local data collated to develop UKSPF priorities and the data from the East Suffolk UKSPF prioritisation survey identified the need to continue town centre and high street improvements and this was one of the top priorities that came out across from the survey results. Local business associations, BIDs, town councils and town groups and organisations have demonstrated a need for direct funding to continue developing their towns plans and progress individual action plans which were developed through People and Places.

The cost-of-living workstream projects will involve a combination of direct delivery, including procurement for a supplier to deliver the food network programme, grant delivery to community groups for warm rooms. The need for grants for the warm rooms to community groups have been identified through East Suffolk Community Partnership Board in which a full programme to address the cost-of-living crisis in East Suffolk has been developed and shown the need to reach the hardest to reach members of our communities through this programme. The need for grants to community groups for this programme has also been identified as a strong theme in the East Suffolk UKSPF prioritisation survey and further developed up through internal Communities and Place UKSPF Working Group.

Project selection for other programmes within the other themes are yet to be decided.

Working with other places: Communities and Place

Do you intend to work with other places on any of the interventions which fall under the Communities and Place investment priority?

No

Working with other places: Supporting Local Business

Do you intend to work with other places on any of the interventions which fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority?

Yes

Working with other places: Supporting Local Business

Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.

E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth, particularly in areas of higher unemployment.

Describe any interventions not included in this list.

Describe any interventions not included in this list.:

Which places do you intend to collaborate with?

Which places do you intend to collaborate with?:

East Suffolk Council is working with Suffolk County Council, and the other four local Suffolk District and Borough Councils', along with advice from New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. This collaboration will continue across the lifespan of UKSPF and appropriate partnership agreements will be put in place.

Working with other places: People and Skills

Do you intend to work with other places on any of the interventions which fall under the People and Skills investment priority?

Yes

Working with other places: People and Skills

Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.

E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps. This provision can include project promoting the importance of work to help people to live healthier and more independent lives, alongside building future financial resilience and wellbeing. Beyond that, this intervention will also contribute to building community cohesion and facilitate greater shared civil pride, leading to better integration for those benefitting from ESOL support. Expected cohorts include, but are not limited to people aged over 50, people with a disability and health condition, women, people from an ethnic minority, young people not in education, employment or training and people with multiple complex needs (homeless, care leavers, ex/offenders, people with substance abuse problems and victims of domestic violence).*via Multiply., E34: Courses including basic skills (digital, English, maths (via Multiply) and ESOL), and life skills and career skills** provision for people who are unable to access training through the adult education budget or wrap around support detailed above. Supplemented by financial support for learners to enrol onto courses and complete qualifications. Beyond that, this intervention will also contribute to building community cohesion and facilitate greater shared civil pride, leading to better integration for those benefitting from ESOL support. **where not being met through Department for Work and Pensions provision.

Describe any interventions not included in this list.

Describe any interventions not included in this list.:

Which places do you intend to collaborate with?

Which places do you intend to collaborate with?:

East Suffolk Council is working with Suffolk County Council, and the other four local Suffolk District and Borough Councils'. This collaboration will continue across the lifespan of UKSPF and appropriate partnership agreements will be put in place.

Public sector equality duty

How have you considered your public sector equality duty in the design of your investment plan?

How have you considered your public sector equality duty in the design of your investment plan ?:

Throughout the development of this investment plan, East Suffolk Council has ensured that the public sector equality duty is designed in throughout.

The Council ensures throughout all of our work that it adheres to the Equality Act 2010, that legally protects people from discrimination in society and the workplace. It states that public services must give 'due regard' to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination

Advance equality of opportunity

Foster good relations

In relation to nine 'protected characteristics'. These protected characteristics are age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. In addition to this, the Council recognises deprivation and socio-economic disadvantage.

Throughout the investment plan development, due regard has been given to protected characteristics in order to ensure there is fair opportunities for all. For example, this has included:

The high street improvement programme will include grant opportunities to make adjustments to town centres to improve accessibility.

The business support programme and the net zero grant scheme will be accessible for all and will not discriminate against any protected characteristics.

The skills programme, in particular the localised economy led skills and community skills programme, will fund programmes that are inclusive and are not for exclusive age groups.

In addition to this, all procured suppliers will be required to adhere to the Council's Equality Policy in order to be awarded the services agreement.

How will you consider your public sector equality duty when implementing your investment plan, including in the selection of projects?

How will you consider your public sector equality duty when implementing your investment plan, including in the selection of projects ?:

In order to ensure that our public sector equality duty is adhered to when implemented in our programmes and projects, every programme will complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), to help ensure that policies, strategies, services, projects, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair and do not create barriers to participation, or disadvantage for any groups protected in law (the Equality Act 2010). The EqIA will be used to assess the actual or potential impact actions might have on different groups in the community.

EqIA assessment forms and process will be completed per programme and checked and signed-off by East Suffolk Council's Head of Communities to ensure compliance and that all potential barriers to programme access or use have been removed.

Risks

Have you identified any key risks that could affect delivery, for example lack of staff or expertise?

Yes

Risks

Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them

Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them:

East Suffolk Council has undertaken a high-level risk analysis on the identified programme / projects, with the key risks as follows:

Ability to find to skilled resources to deliver the programmes. Local Authority procurement processes will be used to increase competition and to widen the reach with potential suppliers.

Rising costs for capital projects. Projects will need that adequate contingency provision has been factored into any capital investments.

Local businesses and community / education organisations may not be able to match fund projects at current intervention levels. Close monitoring of grant take up and the need to factor in the amendment of grant intervention levels accordingly.

Timeframes for year-1 are incredibly tight. A sufficient internal team resource has been attributed; however, this may be affected by local recruitment challenges or take-up of grant programmes.

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership currently delivers the bulk of the local business support programmes, however, the proposed opportunities of devolution in Suffolk have raised uncertainty with the future of the LEP. A competitive procurement process to ensure delivery over a 2-year period will be undertaken.

Local skills providers have all seen a significant reduction in core funding due to the end of ESF, with future sustainability an issue. To mitigate this, through a partnership agreement with Suffolk County Council, a robust tender process will be followed and monitored by East Suffolk Council.

Risks

Have you identified any key fraud risks that could affect UKSPF delivery?

Yes

Risks

Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them.

Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them. :

Fraud risks through the proposed UKSPF are yet to be worked through, however, business grant programmes administered externally on a Suffolk-wide basis through the business support interventions will follow best practise established through the existing mechanisms for current ERDF funded schemes. These existing programmes have controls in place to manage potential fraud and have mechanisms in place through grant agreements to clawback funding if required.

Grant programmes delivered by East Suffolk Council will be assessed for any elements of potential fraud and will be worked up in collaboration with colleagues within East Suffolk Council's Audit and Data Protection Team.

Capacity and capability

Team resource

How many people (FTE) will be put in place to work with UKSPF funding?

How many people (FTE) will be put in place to work with UKSPF funding?:

4.5

Describe what role these people will have, including any seniority and experience.

Describe what role these people will have, including any seniority and experience.:

Leadership Team – providing strategic direction as required, chairing Local Stakeholder Group and reporting to members (all part-time roles):

Nick Khan (Strategic Director – reporting to Corporate Management Team)

Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development and Regeneration – reporting to members and joint chair of the local stakeholder group)

Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities - reporting to members and joint chair of the local stakeholder group)

Marie Webster-Fitch (Economic Development Manager - UKSPF lead for East Suffolk Council)

Overall programme manager (full-time role):

Kay Bonning-Schmitt (Economic Development Project Officer – overseeing progress, ensuring delivery across all programmes, leading procurement, legal processes and monitoring)

Delivery roles (all part-time roles):

Joanne Chapman (Place Based Programme Lead - UKSPF high street programme lead)

Marie Webster-Fitch (Economic Development Manager – overview of Suffolk wide business support and skills programmes)

Morag McInnes (Business and Enterprise Lead – UKSPF business support localised grant programme joint lead)

Simon Charlesworth (Sector Development and Trade Lead - UKSPF business support localised grant programme joint lead)

James Chandler (Skills and Inward Investment lead – UKSPF Skills programme lead)

Adam George (Economic Development Assistant Officer – grant process assistant)

Sam Kenward (Communities Officer – UKSPF skills programme support)

Alex Heys (Communities Manager – UKSPF cost-of-living lead)

Funding Team (all part-time roles):

Ben Porter (Funding Manager – ensuring compliance with the fund regulations, overseeing grant programmes compliance, and financial reporting)

Melissa Williams (Funding Officer – grant programmes delivery support)

Support services (all part-time roles):

Finance Team (providing financial returns as required during the programme)

Procurement Team (providing commissioning and procurement compliance processes)

Legal Team (developing contracts for suppliers, partnership agreements, grant legal paperwork and providing general legal advice)

Data Protection Team (Data Impact Assessments for contracted services and GDPR advice and guidance)

Fraud Team (regulatory fraud checks for grant programmes and service provision)

Team experience and capability

How would you describe your team's current experience of delivering funding and managing growth funds?

Some experience

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for procurement?

Strong capability

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for procurement?

Strong capacity

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for subsidies?

Some capability

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for subsidies?

Some capacity

Capacity and capability: Communities and Place

Does your lead authority have any previous experience of delivering the Communities and Place interventions you have selected?

Yes

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?

Strong capability

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

The key capability challenges under this theme are the ability to work effectively with all town councils, groups and organisations to ensure quick take-up of the grant programme(s) across the principle 12 towns, whilst working with different stakeholders and using negotiation skills to identify and agree each towns key priorities.

The second key challenge under this intervention will be access to a strong volunteer network across the district to deliver programmes such as the food network and warm rooms projects. This will involve close working with the VCSE sector to identify potential providers to deliver the food network programme and work with the third sector to bring forward enough volunteers to deliver and embed the warm rooms initiative.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

Capacity and capability: Communities and Place

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?

Strong capacity

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

Staff resourcing is a key consideration. At this point in time, the Economic Development Team at East Suffolk Council is currently carrying one vacancy – a Town Development Coordinator – which will be a key role to ensuring that the roll out of the high street improvement programme can progress at the rate required for this programme.

In addition to this, town councils, business groups and associations often struggle with capacity due to people often having multiple commitments and high levels of workloads which can lead to capacity issues within towns to projects.

The number and capacity of volunteers to successfully deliver the food network and warm rooms programmes is a key consideration.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

Capacity and capability: Supporting Local Business

Does your lead authority have any previous experience of delivering the Supporting Local Business interventions you have selected?

Yes

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?

Strong capability

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

Learning from recent Covid-19 business grant programmes highlighted the need to ensure adequate resources are in place. This covers grant administration, appraisal (fraud and finance) and monitoring requirements.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

Capacity and capability: Supporting Local Business

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?

Strong capacity

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

Staffing capacity and resources is a key challenge under this theme, particularly with the number of programmes currently being delivered / in development across East Suffolk.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

Capacity and capability: People and Skills

Does your lead authority have any previous experience of delivering the People and Skills interventions you have selected?

Yes

How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?

Strong capability

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

Timely procurement of providers to deliver within the UKSPF timeframes is a key challenge. Uncertainty in funding post 2025 is another key issue.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

Capacity and capability: People and Skills

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?

Strong capacity

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your lead authority or your local/regional delivery system.

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority or your local/regional delivery system.:

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.:

Support to deliver UKSPF

All lead authorities can use up to 4% of their UKSPF allocation to support the delivery of their chosen interventions, but by exception, lead authorities will be able to use more than 4%. Are you planning on using more than 4%?

No

If so, explain why you wish to use more than 4%.

If so, explain why you wish to use more than 4%.:

Approvals

Do you have approval from your Chief Executive Officer for this investment plan?

Yes

Do you have approval from your Section 151 Officer for this investment plan?

Yes

Do you have approval from the leader of your lead authority for this investment plan?

Yes

If you do not have approval from any of these people, explain why this is

If you do not have approval from any of these people, explain why this is :

Additional documents

Have you completed and uploaded the two spreadsheets to the SharePoint folder as requested?

Yes

Edit your answers

Next steps