

Leader's monthly bulletin – February 2023

Welcome to the February edition of my monthly bulletin, aimed at keeping you up to date on the main news stories from East Suffolk and, where possible, giving you a view of upcoming events and projects.

Steve Gallant

Leader of East Suffolk Council

New grant scheme launched to reinvigorate high streets



A new three-year grant programme has been launched to help support East Suffolk's high streets through town centre improvements, arts and cultural activities and improvements to shopfronts.

The East Suffolk High Street Improvement Programme is part of a range of schemes detailed within the East Suffolk Investment Plan, which was developed as part of a submission to the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

East Suffolk Council has been allocated £2.75m through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which will be used to support high streets and local businesses, develop workforce and community skills, as well as support those struggling with the cost of living.

- Grants of between £5,000 and £15,000 will be available for town councils, groups and business associations to improve accessibility, attract more visitors, enhance the unique character of town centres through improvements to public areas, and to improve signage, digital connectivity, walking and cycling. (Jan 2023 – March 2024)
- Between £5,000 and £10,000 will be available to town councils, business associations and arts, culture and heritage organisations to support cultural, arts and heritage activities which would increase visitors, such as music, dance, sport, tours, historical displays, photography, storytelling or crafts. (Jan 2023– March 2024)
- Grants will be available for enhancing physical shopfronts, through replacement windows and doors, reinstating traditionally styled shop fronts, painting and rendering of shop fronts, replacement guttering, signage and more. (April 2024 – March 2025)

Applications for the first round of funding are [now open](#) and close on 17 February.

Former post office to be transformed into creative hub

Ambitious plans to transform Lowestoft's former post office into a visual arts and cultural space have been announced as part of a wider programme of town centre regeneration.

Located within the London Road, Lowestoft High Street Heritage Action Zone, the building was purchased for redevelopment in 2018 and is a flagship project within the Town Investment Plan.



In March 2021, approval was given for a mixed-use commercial and residential development. However, an exciting opportunity has arisen, and a new scheme approved by East Suffolk Council's cabinet, for a visual arts space run by Messums, recognised for revitalising buildings and embedding them within communities through artistic enterprise.

The hub, known as Messums East, will provide a working studio for Laurence Edwards, who began his art education in Lowestoft and developed an international reputation for large scale public works from his base in East Suffolk.

Laurence will be working to create a large-scale bronze landmark sculpture for Lowestoft and will work extensively with the local community from the new studio to see this realised.

Space will also be provided for a revolving residency of international, national, and regional artists, as well as exhibition spaces, a screening room and café/restaurant.

Funded by Historic England and the Towns Fund, works have now been completed on the façade of the Grade II listed building. Planning and listed building consent for the conversion of the building to a gallery will be submitted soon.

East Suffolk residents need photo ID to vote at elections in May



Residents in East Suffolk are being urged to make sure they are ready to vote in May by checking they have an accepted form of ID.

For the first time, voters will need to show photographic identification if they want to cast their ballot at this year's local elections. However, anyone currently without the correct ID can apply for free.

Accepted forms of ID include a UK, European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth passport; a UK, EEA or Commonwealth drivers' licence; and some concessionary travel

passes, such as an older person's bus pass or an Oyster 60+ card. Voters will be able to use expired ID if they are still recognisable from the photo.

Anyone who does not have one of the accepted forms of ID can apply for free ID online, or by completing a paper form. You can find information about the new requirement and what to expect at the polling station on the Electoral Commission's website.

East Suffolk to host clean hydrogen conference

An upcoming conference will focus on harnessing hydrogen power to help further establish East Suffolk as a major hub for energy production.

By examining East Suffolk's potential to become a national centre for the generation, distribution, innovation and adoption of hydrogen, the event will aim to underscore the collective ambition of the private and public sector to achieve net zero.



Among the objectives of the East Suffolk Hydrogen Conference will be to identify and unlock any barriers limiting the development of the local hydrogen economy.

The UK's ambition is for 10 Gigawatts (GW) of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030, subject to affordability and value for money, with at least half coming from electrolytic hydrogen.

Delivered in partnership with the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and in association with the Hydrogen Sector Council, the East Suffolk Hydrogen Conference will showcase planned local hydrogen developments and provide an opportunity to engage with developers, end users, innovators, and stakeholders.

Clare Jackson, CEO of Hydrogen UK, will be keynote speaker and will be joined by major energy developers and end users such as EDF, Scottish Power Renewables, Conrad Energy and Windcat Workboats.

A targeted Q&A panel session will also explore, with the audience, some of the key challenges and opportunities of the nascent hydrogen industry.

The event takes place from 9am-1pm on Thursday 23 February at the OrbisEnergy Centre, in Lowestoft. Click [here](#) for full details.

Finalists revealed for East Suffolk Awards 2023



An impressive collection of businesses, community groups and outstanding individuals have been announced as finalists in the East Suffolk Awards 2023.

The awards are all about recognising the achievements of organisations and people making a positive contribution to life in East Suffolk over the last 12 months.

This year's awards were launched in November, with the winners due to be announced during an event at Snape Maltings on 28 February.

Run by East Suffolk Council, and last staged before the Covid pandemic in 2019, the awards are designed to celebrate excellence, innovation, community spirit and charity.

In addition, this year's Community 'Next Big Idea' award will highlight originality in the development of a concept, creation, or campaign – with the winner receiving a grant to help achieve their dream scheme.

Click [here](#) to find out more about this year's awards, nominees and sponsors.

Schoolchildren help plant new trees in Felixstowe



A group of schoolchildren pitched in to help plant the last crop of hundreds of trees in Felixstowe as part of a biodiversity boosting initiative.

Classmates from Fairfield Infant and Colneis Junior School joined the East Suffolk Norse grounds and maintenance team to plant the final batch of 300 whips beside the public car park in Golf Road.

The planting programme follows a successful joint application to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) by East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council, along with other district and boroughs, through the Forestry Commission, and will see 7,526 trees planted across the county.

As well as the planting, LATF funding of £138,219 will also cover three years of maintenance.

The LATF opened in 2021, as part of the government's Nature for Climate Fund, to support the planting and maintenance of 260,000 trees outside existing woodlands.

In Felixstowe, staff from ESC's grounds and countryside maintenance partners, East Suffolk Norse, focused planting in spaces between the mature maple trees to the front of the carpark – expanding the woodland to the northeast, with a temporary chestnut panel fence installed to protect the new whips.

The new trees are a variety of species, mainly bearing fruits and berries edible to wildlife, and will be regularly watered and surveyed to monitor improvements in biodiversity.

A temporary fence has been erected to protect the new planting from the northern side until the planting is more established.

The project will also serve as a pilot project for the development of a wider Tree Strategy for East Suffolk Council.

Thanks, from Landguard Fort following bumper year

Staff and volunteers at Landguard Fort have thanked visitors from East Anglia and beyond for their support in making 2022 another successful year for the Felixstowe attraction.

A visit from Santa rounded off a bumper 2022, which saw more than 22,000 visitors pass through the gates of one of Suffolk's top visitor attractions – taking them on a journey through over 400 years of military, social and geopolitical history.

Other highlights included the introduction of a multimedia tour app, additional ramps for wheelchair users, collaboration with Felixstowe Museum to offer money saving joint-tickets, reintroduction of 'ghost tours', installation of two replica 17th century cannons, the development of a new Victorian officers' quarters exhibit and the complete revision of all interpretation signage.



The fort was chosen as the 2022 venue for an episode of *Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway*, a performance by The Suffolk Youth Orchestra (pictured), an art installation called 'Journey with a Container', an open-air theatre production of *The Wind In The Willows*, the Festival of the Sea, events to commemorate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and 'The Little Fort Of Horrors' Halloween scare-night events.

'Felixstowe's Big Festive Family Treat event provided the season finale, and biggest feature of 2022, when more than 1,500 people visited the fort between 17 and 19 December.

Landguard Fort is now closed until February half term, when it will be open every day from Saturday 11 to Sunday 19 February.

A special event is also being planned for anyone interested in volunteering to help run the popular visitor attractions of Landguard Peninsula.

The Landguard Open Day, from 11am-3pm on Saturday 18 March, will offer prospective volunteers the chance to learn about operations at the site's historic Landguard Fort, Felixstowe Museum and Landguard Nature Reserve.

Film commemorates 70th anniversary of 1953 floods



A film has been produced to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the 1953 floods, while also reflecting on the 2013 East Coast tidal surge and future challenges.

The North Sea flood of 1953 was one of the worst peacetime disasters of 20th century. In England alone 307 people lost their lives, many of those on the Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex coast.

Coastal Partnership East, in partnership with the Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, is supporting schools, parishes, communities and others to remember those sadly lost, and those affected by the floods of 1953, by providing a film that includes memories of those who were there in 1953, stories from those who have captured memories of those no longer with us and reflections of those who remember family members affected by the floods.

The film, entitled A Surge of Memories, also includes reflections from some of those impacted by the 2013 East Coast tidal surge and takes a look at future challenges.

The film is available to [download from the Coast East website](#) or a copy on USB stick can be requested from james.cochrane@eastsoffolk.gov.uk.

Community grant scheme helping to fund cost-of-living support projects

More than 20 projects are benefitting from a grant scheme set up to help people stay warm and connected this winter – with further funding now available under the Cost-of-Living Community Grant Fund.

The scheme was launched in November to enable voluntary organisations and community groups to help people struggling to meet the cost of living in East Suffolk.



Funded via the Suffolk Collaborative Communities Board, from the Suffolk Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), the scheme has so far helped more than 20 projects, including warm rooms hosted by YMCA Trinity Group, in Lowestoft, Middleton-cum-Fordley Parish Council and 5th Woodbridge Sea Scouts.

The primary objective of the Cost-of-Living Community Grant is to fund activities that aim to keep people warm and socially connected. Also welcome are the provision of drinks, snacks, and hot food, as well as any activities or advice and information to support people with the rising cost of living.

The fund closes on Friday 24 March and grants must be spent within six months of the award.

Projects should complement and not duplicate any projects funded through the East Suffolk Ease the Squeeze programme.

The fund will provide grants of between £500 and £5,000 for projects which support residents struggling due to the rising cost of living.

Applicants should [read the Guidance Notes](#) and [complete the application form](#) carefully and provide as much information as possible to enable the panel to understand the project and what it will deliver.

Surveys and consultations

As always, we want to encourage participation in surveys and consultations, as feedback from people in East Suffolk is invaluable and helps us ensure we're making the right decisions for our communities.

- **Proposed Aldeburgh Park Conservation Area and three proposed extensions to existing Aldeburgh Conservation Area**

Proposals to create a new Conservation Area at Aldeburgh Park and three extensions to the existing Aldeburgh Conservation Area. Feedback should be provided by 5pm on Friday 17 February.

[Proposed Aldeburgh Park Conservation Area and three proposed extensions to existing Aldeburgh Conservation Area](#)

- **Draft Coastal Adaptation Supplementary Planning Document**

Consultation on document providing guidance on planning policy approaches along the coast from Holkham to Landguard Point. Comments on the Draft Coastal Adaptation Supplementary Planning Document must be submitted by 5pm on Wednesday 8 March 2023.

[Draft Coastal Adaptation Supplementary Planning Document](#)

- **Proposed Changes to Conservation Areas in Southwold**

Proposals to extend the existing Southwold Conservation Area, including to become amalgamated with the northern part of the Southwold Harbour and Walberswick Quay Conservation Area. Feedback should be provided by 5pm on Wednesday 15 March.

[Proposed Changes to Conservation Areas in Southwold](#)

- **Extended consultation on Leiston Town Centre Masterplan Framework Document**

Further consultation period, to be launched in January, on a masterplan and supporting framework for the centre of Leiston.

[Leiston Town Centre Masterplan](#)

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