

December 2025 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Discover Suffolk through 'Wonderlust by Bus'

"Wonderlust by Bus" is a new map, featuring many popular tourist locations across the county, helping visitors to plan their journeys through passenger transport and active travel options. A play on the word Wanderlust, meaning a desire to travel, "Wonderlust by Bus" showcases all of the Wonders that can be seen when travelling across Suffolk. The map features bus route and timetable information via SuffolkOnBoard and directs people to Good Journey, for walking and cycling routes, a cycling journey planner and discounts on entry to Good Journey destinations such as cafés and gift shops, for visitors who have travelled using sustainable transport. The interactive map can be viewed online at: www.wonderlustbybus.co.uk

Residents and visitors to Suffolk can also pick up a copy of the map from more than 900 locations across the county, including libraries, local shops, rail stations, hotels and leisure centres. The map is also displayed in the reception of the council's head office, Endeavour House, via a 2-metre x 3-metre mural on the wall. We are delighted to launch the "Wonderlust by Bus" map, which we hope will make it even easier for people to plan their journeys and discover some of the most exciting and inspiring locations Suffolk has to offer. Through Suffolk on Board and Good Journey, "Wonderlust by Bus" highlights discounts, route information, and active travel options, making travel across the county simpler, and more sustainable. The map has been designed by Steamboat Creative, led by Reb Capper, a Felixstowe-based design studio with a deep passion for illustration and cartography - using beautifully crafted visuals to highlight key information and uncover the "wee wonders" across Suffolk and beyond.

One Suffolk plan gains county-wide backing as Government launches consultation

It comes as the Government launches a [consultation on the future of local councils in Suffolk](#), which is likely to see either one or as many as three councils tasked with delivering services for the next 50 years. Millions of pounds of taxpayers' money is at stake, as is the sustainability and delivery of critical public services like social care, highways and housing.

Suffolk businessman, Richard Brame, said: "I would like to see one unitary council that is better connected but better connected with business too. So, when we are looking to have a discussion about property, broadband or rates, we know where to go. Nobody does at the moment and frequently it's more than one place. If this was a business, there would be no question. Would you have three CFOs, or would you have one? Would you have three HR departments, or would you have one? From a business perspective, from a strategic perspective, one unitary is a really obvious route to go down."

Pete Waters, executive director of Visit East Anglia, said: "Visitors do not recognise current district authority geographies, they go where they want in Suffolk. Visitors do recognise counties. LGR offers the opportunity for Visit East of England (VEE) to market locations based on their draw for visitors, rather than arbitrary council boundaries. "Working with one county unitary would give VEE the opportunity to contribute to the bigger strategic picture for Suffolk's visitor economy, rather than focus on arbitrary boundaries."

Nick Hulme, chief executive of East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust, said: "The fragmentation that would result from dividing governance and service provision across three councils poses potential risks to patient care continuity and system efficiency. "A multicouncil model would likely perpetuate the postcode lottery we already contend with - where patients face unequal access to services depending on their location. "A single unitary council would provide a unified governance structure, enabling consistent policy, streamlined decision-making, and more effective joint planning across the region."

Prema Fairburn-Dorai, Suffolk Care Association chairperson, said: "Although it is not the ideal solution to the social care crisis, the majority of our members are in favour of a One Suffolk model as

it will in the long run cause less disruption and will afford continuity of services to vulnerable individuals in Suffolk.”

David Barker MBE, Suffolk farmer, said: “It will make life so much easier for farmers to have a consistent approach from one council. We have one farm at Westhorpe and one at Great Ashfield, and under the three tier proposal they would be in different areas – which really wouldn’t make a lot of sense. “I’ve also been involved with the local access forum, and we work with one Suffolk County Council across the whole of Suffolk. That makes so much more sense than having three different councils with three different local access forums.” The One Suffolk business case demonstrates that a single unitary for Suffolk is the only financially viable option. In the first five years, it will see savings of £78.2 million, while three councils would cost a £145.3 million more than the current two-tier system. “Additionally, one council would save £39.4 million a year from year six, whereas three would cost £13.1 million more than the current model. The business case is built on rigorous financial analysis of Suffolk-based data conducted by global advisory firm Grant Thornton, rather than using generic national modelling as used in the three-council model.”

The time has come for everyone in Suffolk to let the government know their views on the future of local councils. Do we want a local authority that is smarter, simpler and better - leading to better outcomes for residents and businesses? Or a factional group of councils that would pit different areas against each other and be in financial peril from day one? Detailed analysis has shown that One Suffolk would save £39.4 million each year, meaning town and parish councils can be empowered to do more if they want, our highways services can be revitalised and a new deal for market towns backed by a £40 million capital investment fund can be launched. This is all possible without any loss of local identity or understanding. It will only strengthen it. The alternative three-council idea is based on an unrealistic proposal and built on promises that have failed elsewhere. It would put at risk those most in need and, after five years, leave Suffolk £145.3 million in the red. Simply put, it is a reckless use of public money. Thousands have already engaged with us and helped shape the One Suffolk proposal. I urge everyone to have their say in the public consultation.

Suffolk County Council continues to drive electric vehicle progress

The county council continues to be one of the country’s leading local authorities for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, under its Plug In Suffolk project. Plug in Suffolk has grown considerably in recent years to provide more EV charging solutions to more Suffolk residents. We have been pioneers in Suffolk, and are putting national funding to good use to find solutions to help our residents make the important transition to EVs. The county council’s latest EV charging solution is a trial of cross-pavement gullies. It is working with around 30 residents who do not have off-street parking to easily charge. The trial has seen each homeowner have a gully installed across the pavement, allowing them to safely run a cable from their house, through the gully, to their car. The success of the project will be assessed in early 2026, to see if it can be rolled out further. Early indications are that it has proved popular. The Plug In Suffolk project began nearly seven years ago, as the UK’s first ‘fully open’ public fast charging network for electric vehicles, meaning drivers simply pay by contactless payment with no need to register their details. Around 100 of these chargepoints were installed in largely rural locations, such as community centres. Following a successful bid in March 2024 to the government’s Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, the county council was awarded £5.3 million to install on-street chargepoints. It was the first local authority in England to both award their LEVI main funding tender, and subsequently sign a contract with an operator, *Believ*, who are providing a further £16 million of funding, meaning Suffolk will see 6,000 chargepoints installed. Find out more about [Plug in Suffolk](#) on the Suffolk County Council website.

New Armed Forces Covenant for Suffolk

As Britain prepares to honour its war dead in Remembrance Week a new pledge to support our serving and former personnel has been signed by Suffolk County Council. The council is a signatory

to the Armed Forces Covenant, a formal pledge by the nation to ensure that members of the military community—those who serve or have served, and their families—are treated fairly and with respect. Launched in 2012, the original Covenant pledge focused on integration and shared armed forces community/civil society joint benefit projects. It also set out the conditions to deliver the covenant locally such as the creation of an Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board and the appointment of a politically independent Armed Forces Commissioner for Suffolk. The new Covenant better reflects the engagement, learning, legislation, and delivery that has taken place since the original pledge signed by most local authorities, including Suffolk, since 2012. It was signed Councillor Matthew Hicks, the leader of Suffolk County Council, supported by council chairman Councillor Jessica Fleming and Suffolk Armed Forces Commissioner Andrew Smith. Through Remembrance we rightly honour all those who gave their lives in conflict. However, it is also important that we recognise the unique contribution of those in our community who are serving now or who have served, which we do through the covenant. I am delighted to sign this new pledge. Suffolk has a long and proud military heritage and continues to be home to serving personnel, veterans, reservists, and their families. As a council it is important that we recognise their dedication and sacrifice, and we are committed to ensuring they are not disadvantaged in accessing services, support, and opportunities. It is important that we honour our Armed Forces community not only in words but through meaningful action. The Covenant helps ensure they feel valued, supported, and fully included in the life of the county. In recent years operations like Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted issues like poor housing, mental health care, and medical support for veterans. The Covenant is a way to help address these concerns and I am delighted that Suffolk Council County Council continues to pledge its support.

How Local Culture projects are Bringing Suffolk Together

Our £500,000 Culture Project Fund is open again for its second year. The fund supports arts and museum projects of all sizes across Suffolk, helping creativity to thrive in our towns and villages. In its first year, the Culture Project Fund supported a wide range of projects, and it's been brilliant to see what has been achieved. In Stowmarket, Jubilant brought together schools, artists and young performers in a youth-led celebration of local creativity. In Sudbury, Gainsborough's House launched Pulling Prints, a free printmaking course for 18- to 25-year-olds. Over six months, participants are developing new skills, working with professional artists and preparing to exhibit their work at the Mill Tye Gallery. But this fund isn't just about young people, it's for everyone. We've supported projects that reach adults from all backgrounds and communities. Future Female Society in Ipswich is running a podcast series with refugee women, giving them space to share their stories and connect with others. Eastern Angles is creating a new touring play exploring the teaching of sign language, while The HAL Company in Bury St Edmunds is developing a theatre piece with people who have experienced life after prison. These projects show how culture can help people build confidence, learn new skills and feel part of something bigger. They also show how creative activity contributes to other important goals improving wellbeing, strengthening local economies and supporting inclusion across Suffolk. Applications for the second year of the fund are now open, with grants available for projects large and small. Whether you're part of a community group, a museum, a local arts organisation or a creative freelancer, we'd love to hear your ideas. By investing in culture, we're investing in Suffolk's communities. These projects remind us that creativity isn't just about performance or exhibitions it's about people coming together, learning from one another and celebrating what makes this county such a great place to live.

For more information or to apply, visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund.

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