

# **SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Economic Development, Tourism & Regeneration Strategy 2004 – 2009**

## Introduction

**‘To stimulate a prosperous and sustainable economy in order to improve the quality of life of the community’**

This strategy aims to highlight the challenges and issues for economic development and community regeneration within the Suffolk Coastal district. It brings together best practice, builds on existing work and sets out long term goals, based on the Council's key aims and objectives (as set out in the Balanced Scorecard) and those of the Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership. It also supports the aims and objectives of the Haven Gateway Partnership and the Suffolk Development Agency. The outcome is an effective framework for action by the Council over the next five years complimenting the work of many other agencies and businesses who share those goals and objectives.

### **Vision, Ambitions and Values of SCDC**

The vision for the future of Suffolk Coastal is that, building upon the best of the present, it should be a district where people:

- Want to live, invest and visit
- Care for others and the Environment

The Council's goal is to help, together with other relevant bodies, to realise our vision by ensuring that Suffolk Coastal is a place where the community continues to enjoy the highest Quality of Life and receive top quality efficient services from the District Council.

Targets to achieve by 2009 ;

- Reduction in number of wards within the most 20% deprived in England
- To reach or exceed county average levels for unemployment rates, skills levels and average earnings
- Increase the value of tourism by 2%
- To use the Economic Development budget to attract and lever in 8 times it's amount of external investment into the District

Our Strategy reflects that economic development and regeneration is a crosscutting theme running throughout the Council's aims of:

- Strengthening the Economy
- Tackling rural issues
- Protecting and enhancing the Environment
- Meeting housing needs
- Developing a safe and healthy community with access to leisure opportunities
- Fulfilling its obligations by the quality delivery of all its essential services

## **Background**

Suffolk Coastal covers an area of 343 square miles to the north and east of Ipswich with a population of 115,141, of which 22% is under 18 years of age and 26% over 60 (2001 census). A third of the District lies within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and 50 km of the coastline is defined as Heritage Coast. Both of these national landscape designations recognise the largely rural unspoilt character of the District. In addition there are many areas of national and international nature conservation importance, notably on the coast and estuaries. The majority of the population is concentrated in seven towns, the largest being Felixstowe, Woodbridge and Kesgrave, all of which are located in the south of the District.

The workforce living within the district is in easy commuting distance of Ipswich, with London over an hours journey away by train. With the dominance of the port, warehousing and distribution is a major employer, with agriculture and tourism also playing a major part. The district is also home to a number of high-tech business clusters, especially around Martlesham Heath and Framlingham Technology Centre.

Being a coastal district provides some socio-economic benefits for the local community, however this also presents some challenges, not the least being the management of some 55 km of a largely soft and eroding coastline. Also the poor communications infrastructure and resulting remoteness of many coastal communities can be an attraction to the tourism sector but a deterrent to other types of business. However, the high quality environment, in particular the beautiful scenery and tranquil character of the District coupled with its close proximity to London make this an extremely attractive place in which to live, work and visit.

## **Snapshot of the Local Economy**

### **Population**

The 2001 Census gives a residential population of the district as 115,135, of which 55,796 are male and 59,339 female. The population of the district as a whole continues to increase with a 6% rise from the last census. However, the age structure of the population has changed, with the highest percentage within the 45-59 year age band (21%). Although the district has the lowest percentage of population over 65 years of age for the whole of Suffolk, it boasts the highest life expectancy rates for women at 82.4 years, compared to the Suffolk average of 81.7 years. Men have the second highest life expectancy after Mid Suffolk at 78.0 years, compared to the Suffolk average of 77.3 years. These demographics are reflected in lower than average numbers of people who are economically active and therefore contributing to economic growth & prosperity.

## Employment

Suffolk Coastal's economic activity rate is 73.6%, the lowest of the whole of Suffolk (average 81%). The largest proportion of the population within the district is employed in the transport and communications sector (25.2%), compared to a national average of 6.1%, closely followed by distribution. The public sector is the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest employer, with agriculture at 4.9% (5 times the national average). Tourism is a major employment sector within the region and has great potential for future growth.

Currently there are over 4518 businesses trading in the area. Of these a very high percentage employs less than 50 people within its workforce, many less than 10. Thus the majority of employment within the district is based on diverse micro businesses based in the rural economy. There are only 32 VAT registered firms per 1000 people, compared to the Suffolk average of 42. It is estimated that many of the businesses are therefore too small to be VAT registered (ie with a turnover under £58,000 pa). The council needs to support the smaller, 'lifestyle' businesses that enable people to both live and work in rural areas and to facilitate and encourage those with growth potential.

Industry	Percentage of Workforce		
	Suffolk Coastal	Suffolk County	Great Britain
Transport	25.2	8.0	6.1
Distribution*	24.9	26.1	24.3
Public Sector	17.5	22.7	24.3
Banking	8.3	12.6	19.6
Manufacturing	8.0	16.1	14.2
Agriculture	4.9	2.4	1.0
Construction	4.3	4.3	4.5
Other	4.0	5.1	5.2
Energy	2.0	2.7	0.8

However, EEDA has ranked Suffolk Coastal top of the 18 districts within the region, having strong economic performance and low deprivation. Other local economic indicators support this view, with the number of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants at 1.5 %, compared to Suffolk as a whole at 2% of the population. Earnings within the district are the highest average for the whole of the county at £364 per week and an hourly rate of £10.17; compared to Suffolk in general with £326 and an hourly rate of £9.56. This figure is over-inflated by the exceptional pay rates earned by those involved in high level Research & Development at BT Exact. Many of the jobs available in the north of the district are low skilled, low paid or seasonal. 55,000 people are economically active with 75.1% actually in work, which is below the Suffolk average of 82%. Over 29% of the wards (12) within the district are also in the bottom ranking 10% of the index of deprivation (i.e. are the least

deprived) ,whilst there are pockets of deprivation and the highest unemployment rate within the district is in Felixstowe South at just above 4%. This highlights the diverse and disparate economic factors operating within the district

## **Labour force skills**

The District has the most qualified workforce within Suffolk. (Census 2001) Only 26% of the workforce have no formal qualifications, with 48% qualified to Level 3 or above, while 20% have achieved a Level 4 or higher qualification (degree level). The district has the fewest hard-to-fill vacancies of any district within Suffolk at 27% (compared to Forest Heath at 67%) (LSC Suffolk Employer Survey 2000). However, there is an issue that many of the seasonal or traditional jobs are low skilled, and therefore low waged, widening the gap between the lowest and highest paid employees within the District. The District could benefit by becoming a centre of excellence for the hospitality and retail sectors due to the numbers employed in these areas.

## **Agriculture & Farm Diversification**

Agriculture plays an important part of the economy within Suffolk Coastal, with employment in the sector nearly 5 times the national average. However, the industry has been undergoing many changes and will do so in the future with new Government legislation over single payment entitlements. Many farmers are looking for ways to diversify and the Council encourages derelict agricultural land and buildings back into business use via rate reduction schemes. Producing products for niche and local markets is also providing a viable business for many farmers, with a number of farm shops, cafes, Bed & Breakfast, self-catering accommodation and farm attractions opening in the area.

The local FE College (Otley) has a traditional background in teaching agricultural and horticultural courses and is expanding it's FoodSkills Centre to provide training and assistance to local food production businesses.

## **The Port of Felixstowe**

The Port of Felixstowe is the busiest and biggest UK container hub and fifth largest in Europe. Its annual container throughput is carried world-wide by some 90 shipping lines. Felixstowe is also the second busiest UK port for roll-on roll-off freight traffic. Container trains link with the main industrial regions by day and night with two rail terminals near the quays. The Felixstowe area has become an established base, around which many shipping, freight forwarding and allied businesses have grown. From here, many internationally recognised companies manage their operations both in Europe and world-wide. The Felixstowe area enjoys a stable and diverse economy, with an established record of growth. There are current plans to expand the docks and SCDC is working to ensure that this has a positive effect on the local economy.

## **Sizewell**

The decommissioning process for the Sizewell A Magnox nuclear power station is due to start in 2006. This process is expected to take place over several years. Staff affected by the changes will be encourage to re-skill or re-train. Its effect on the economy of the north of the

district will need to be closely monitored and support given to the local communities to alleviate any negative impacts.

## **Market Towns**

Within the towns, the Council's policies are designed to help preserve and enhance the function and character of each town by ensuring a mixture of shops, offices, restaurants and leisure facilities. There has recently been greater significance to the role of market towns in terms of affecting rural regeneration. Suffolk Coastal is home to two of the five Suffolk Market Town Initiatives set up as a result of this – Wickham Market and Woodbridge & Melton. Both MTI's have completed health checks and have implementing a number of community led projects.

While many of these projects tend to be small in scale and local in focus, they are significant insofar as they are contributing to the social and physical infrastructures of market towns which exist at the heart of rural economies.

Further initiatives are going on in the other market towns within Suffolk Coastal, namely Framlingham, Saxmundham and Leiston. The latter two have been part of a seven year SRB scheme and are now moving into a second phase of setting up Community Development partnerships. Framlingham and Wickham Market have recently established their own Development Trusts.

These trusts enable local people to play a more involved and active part in the development of their community and what happens within it, facilitated by Suffolk Coastal District Council.

## **Telecommunications**

BT Exact is based on Adastral Park at Martlesham Heath, near Ipswich and it operates as an IT research and development centre employing more than 3,000 engineers and scientists. Further research is also carried out through the close involvement of four universities, which operate "remote" laboratories on site. A strong cluster of Telecom and ITC related businesses have sprung up around the area.

Detailed proposals are under development to establish the Suffolk Innovation Park at Adastral Park.

## **Tourism**

Tourism is recognised as being one of the five largest industries within the UK and this importance is reflected in the District. The overall value of tourism to Suffolk Coastal in 2000 was an estimated £142.5 million.<sup>1</sup> Of this, approximately £59.2 million (37%) was generated by staying visitors and approximately £89.5 million (63%) generated by day visitors. This expenditure supported an estimated 2,788 full time job equivalents (FTEs) and when part-time and seasonal jobs are considered, tourism expenditure supports a total of 3,906 actual jobs.

The attractive, richly diverse countryside and coastline, particularly within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an extremely important asset in marketing the District as a high quality visitor destination. The impact of the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001/2 whilst not directly affecting the District, clearly demonstrated the importance of the countryside to the tourism industry and there is a recognition of the need for closer liaison between the agriculture and tourism interests. In recent years the popularity of some visitor destinations has resulted in significant adverse impacts on the host communities. In such cases support has been provided to help the communities introduce local management solutions. Also due to the soft nature of the coastline, erosion and risk of flooding have presented a continual threat in some areas. The future management of the coastline through Shoreline & Estuary Shoreline Management Plans will need to carefully consider the tourism and wider economic impacts of all of the management options.

The tourism appeal of the District to the west of the A12 receives less attention in comparison to the coast, however initiatives such as the Invitation to View and the Heart of Suffolk Cycle & Bridle Trails have begun to raise the awareness of visitors.

Felixstowe is a major focus for tourism with its blue flag beaches, amusements and other attractions. There is a shortage of accommodation within the town and the Council encourages the development of additional tourist accommodation.

The Council has helped to promote 'environmentally friendly' tourism in line with the changing demands of visitors and is assisting with the implementation of the CONNECT visitor payback scheme which is being developed by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Partnership. It has promoted the use of Green Audit kits within tourism businesses and the Tourism Information Centres also have a role to play in managing visitors during peak season.

## **Culture and Heritage**

The tranquil beauty of Suffolk Coastal has long attracted artists, craft makers, writers and musicians. Most notably, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears spent many years in Aldeburgh and, at nearby Snape Maltings, created a concert hall and music school of international significance. Their vision lives on in the work of Aldeburgh Productions, which is currently raising £8m to develop the 'Aldeburgh Campus' - a European creative centre that is due to receive major capital support from Arts Council England.

Aldeburgh Productions already has an economic impact on the area estimated at £1.3m, and this looks set to rise to £1.8m as the Aldeburgh Campus develops over the coming 2-3 years. Other arts activities, such as the annual Aldeburgh Poetry Festival (the biggest in the country), boost tourism and help spread its seasonal impact.

This is also an area with a rich heritage, quite literally. The Anglo-Saxon treasure unearthed at Sutton Hoo in 1939 is one of Europe's most spectacular archaeological finds, and has been put into context by more recent work presented in a new National Trust site museum

that attracts 80,000 visitors per annum. However, to single out these highlights is unfair on the many hundreds of other places, individuals and groups that contribute to Suffolk Coastal's cultural life. Many local businesses are part of this, particularly those involved in the tourism sector. There is also a strong tradition of community initiative, with scores of local groups forming the backbone of provision in museums and the arts.

The District Council is itself a key player in maintaining and enhancing many cultural activities – both through its planning and environmental roles, and as a direct provider of leisure facilities, public open spaces, countryside management, resort activities and tourist information centres. The Council supports the Spa Pavilion Theatre in Felixstowe and the Suffolk Museums Partnership. Many voluntary and community groups throughout the district are also assisted by the arts and leisure development services.

Source SDA			Staying visitors			Day visitors		Jobs	
			Trips	Nights	Spend	Trips	Spend	FTE's	Actual
<b>Suffolk County</b>	1998	£583.4m	1.5m	5.0m	£148.6m	19.1m	£434.8m	13,872	18,852
	2000	£705.2m	2.3m	7.0m	£227.3m	19.9m	£477.9m	16,751	22,715
<b>Suffolk Coastal</b>	1998	£123.3m	343,000	1.4m	£38.5m	4.1m	£84.8m	2414	3389
	2000	£142.4m	498,000	1.7m	£52.9m	4.1m	£89.5m	2788	3906

## Commercial Land & Property

There is a range of commercial land and property available, but current demand is for food manufacturing and high quality office space for immediate occupation, of which the district is in short supply. Recent developments within the district have included a Business Centre at Leiston, built by EEDA, new office accommodation at Deben Mill, Woodbridge and feasibility studies to build food incubators at Otley College and an enterprise village in Felixstowe. The Technology Centre at Framlingham is an independent business incubation centre, aimed at small businesses within the high-tech industry, who can work together to compete for larger contracts. The Centre provides 1580 square metres of space and currently is nearly at full capacity. This new venture is proving successful in supporting ITC micro-businesses in the local rural economy.

## House Prices

There has been a significant movement of people away from urban areas into the district, attracted by the quality of life. The average house price has risen to £175,240, compared to a



county average of £155,423 and a country rate of £163,584 <sup>1</sup>. The area also attracts many second-home buyers or people retiring to the area, especially along the coast. This has had the affect of pricing local people from the market and is a factor in the movement of many young people out of the district.

## **Transport**

As a district largely rural in character, access to transport is a key issue. The A14 and A12 are the two major roads servicing the district; the A12 having good dual-carriage access from Ipswich only as far as Woodbridge. The northern part of the A12 is mainly single carriage way and parts are in need of an upgrade. The proposed '5 Village' by-pass around Fornham would improve both travel times and road safety. The Port of Felixstowe is one of the largest five within Europe, connecting with over 100 countries world-wide and 360 other ports. Thus, a substantial amount of road traffic is generated daily, much of it along the A14 towards Cambridge. Upgrading the Felixstowe to Nuneaton (F2N) route would enable a much greater percentage of freight to be moved from the road network to rail. The nearest airports are Norwich and Stansted, both just over an hours drive away.

There is access to some of the main towns via the East Suffolk rail line and frequent services from Ipswich to London. The reduction in the frequency of buses, especially within the northern rural areas means that vulnerable groups such as the elderly and those on low incomes are further disadvantaged.

## **Crime**

Although crime levels are low statistically, the fear of crime is high. Suffolk Coastal has the second lowest crime rate in the county at 48.8 per 1000 population, compared with the county average of 71 per 1000. Work is being carried out by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to assist in the funding of a range of crime prevention projects around the district. Priority is given to tackling anti-social behaviour. This partnership is compiled of representatives from the Police, Fire and Local Health Authorities as well as members from both the District and County Council. Local action groups are also operational within Woodbridge, Leiston and Felixstowe to tackle specific local issues.

## **Health & Wellbeing**

Suffolk Coastal is a relatively affluent and healthy area in which to live when compared to most of Suffolk and England. The 2004 Health Atlas for Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridge does identify some key public health issues for East Suffolk (which includes Suffolk Coastal) as the proportion of older people, teenage conceptions, and cancer rates. The annual reports from the Director of Public Health in Suffolk Coastal also demonstrate that there are certain areas within the District that experience poorer health than others, a factor which is strongly linked to those areas where people are less well off or experiencing deprivation.

## **Education**

SCDC is committed to enhancing the economic prosperity of the district and the quality of life of all its residents through access to education, learning and training. This is in line with the Government's White Paper, *Skills for Success* (published in July 2003) which has set out a strategy to ensure that business skill needs are being met and the workforce is equipped to succeed in employment and achieve personal fulfilment.

Other than Cambridge, East Anglia as a whole suffers from the loss of young adults leaving the area to undertake university courses elsewhere, but not coming back. This has a direct effect on the local economy, with a 'creaming off' of the labour force. This is an ongoing problem for the whole of Suffolk, which has to be addressed by a number of partners. One critical factor is a lack of a university within the county. Therefore SCDC, through its partners, adds its support to the campaign for a University Campus for Suffolk.

The District is within the catchment areas of 3 Further Education colleges (Otley College, Lowestoft College and Suffolk College), while a vast number of other training providers offer courses, bespoke training, adult education and distance learning within the region. The Council itself runs a number of courses within Health & Safety and Food Hygiene for local businesses. The LSC Suffolk Employer Survey 2000 – noted that cost, lack of knowledge about local training and the non-availability of relevant and convenient training courses appear to be significant factors for businesses that do not provide training. The LSC is currently implementing the Skills Strategy, which aims to bring in significant funding for workplace training. This will lead to every adult within Suffolk having the opportunity to study free for NVQ level 2 or similar.

## **Communications Infrastructure**

The lack of Broadband has been cited as one of the main infrastructural barriers to business growth within the district. Now most of the larger settlements, such as Woodbridge, Framlingham and Felixstowe are Broadband enabled. The Council supports moves such as EEDA's 'Demand Broadband' campaign to bring accessible and affordable Broadband to all rural communities. Access to Broadband is seen as a critical factor in encouraging greater home-working and increasing the ease in which micro-businesses can operate in rural areas.

## **SCDC's role in the local economy**

Suffolk Coastal offers an attractive environment for future economic investment opportunities, especially due to its close links with the Midlands, London, East of England and as a gateway to Europe. The District also looks to protect and develop its rural heritage to ensure it remains an attractive location for both tourists and residents alike.

SCDC is itself a major employer within the district, with over 300 staff employed at a number of sites. The Council purchases a large amount of goods and services, with a policy to procure from local businesses wherever possible.

SCDC is committed to supporting economic development within the region through the leverage of funding, astute use of funds and attraction of additional resources. The complexity of factors that contribute to the development of a healthy and vibrant economy mean that it is essential that the Council works in partnership with businesses, other statutory agencies and the local community to ensure that much more can be achieved for the benefit of the district.

The Suffolk Coastal Local Strategy Partnership (SCLSP) has been set up to this effect, bringing together public, private, voluntary and community organisations. The SCLSP is responsible for preparing and delivering a Community Strategy, which current works to the following key priorities:

- Tackling issues relating to young people
- Providing additional affordable housing
- Improving accessibility to services and jobs
- Reducing the fear of crime
- Supporting voluntary and community groups to develop and thrive<sup>1</sup>

Success can then be achieved via a mixture of:

- Direct project intervention
- The steering of mainstream funding
- Partnership development and working

# Local Economic Analysis

## Strengths

- Architectural heritage
- Tranquillity & natural beauty of the area
- Strong cultural heritage & attractions
- High quality tourism product
- Port of Felixstowe
- High tech communications cluster (BT)
- Proximity to London
- A14 (& access to Midlands)
- Changes in traditional industries
- Above average number of retired people with high disposable income
- Tradition of self employment

## Threats

- Loss of community cohesion from second homes
- Seasonal tourism
- Rural marginalisation
- Limited employment opportunities in some rural areas
- Closure of key village services
- An ageing population
- Changes in redevelopment and regeneration funding streams
- Decommissioning of Sizewell A

## Weaknesses

- Limited public transport
- Patchy broadband coverage
- Inadequate facilities for young people
- Lack of affordable housing
- Rurally isolated communities
- No Suffolk based university
- The northern stretch of the A12
- East Coast Rail Line
- Dependence upon low paid seasonal / part-time employment
- Lack of up-to-date market intelligence
- Numbers of people who commute out of the district

## Opportunities

- Tourist attractions & extension of season
- Local arts and craft facilities
- Development of the high-tech cluster
- Stimulating business growth
- Expansion EU membership
- Enhanced participation and contributions from voluntary and community sectors
- Greater partnership working and cross reference with other strategic initiatives
- Renewable energy
- Improved access to rail network for freight transportation
- LSC Skills Strategy Review

### **Challenges to address for the future:**

- The high dependency on port, telecom, transport and distribution sectors
- Encourage self-employment as an employment option.
- Facilitate and support business formation and expansion
- Stimulate deprived communities in both rural and urban areas
- Encourage 'value added' production and diversification by the agriculture sector
- Overcome low level of high-quality office space and food manufacturing facilities
- Stem the outflow of skilled young people from the area
- Encourage skills training and work-related qualifications
- Tackle dependency of workers on low skilled occupations
- Improve co-ordination of a fragmented tourism industry
- Focus on value over volume within tourism
- Identify resources from partners and work in closer co-operation to address issues

### **To tackle these issues, we will work to seven Key Economic Themes:**

- Support of new and existing businesses
- Regeneration of towns and rural areas
- Promotion and development of business clusters
- Skills development of workforce
- Transport and communications infrastructure
- Support for local communities
- Develop tourism, resorts and the environment / heritage of the district

### **The Future**

In the future, the role of the Sub-Regional Economic Partnerships (SREPs) – the Suffolk Development Agency (SDA) and Haven Gateway (HGP) will develop; the role of the business community and the move towards community organisations and social enterprises delivering economic improvements is forecast to expand. The Local Strategic Partnership will grow in importance. There is therefore a key role for SCDC in brokering and participating in partnership activity ensuring that all public sector partners are working together in a constructive way.

**Suffolk Coastal - Where Quality of Life Counts**

The actions in this strategy form part of the District Council's contribution to both the Local Strategic Partnership and SREPs strategic objectives. This strategy links with the District Council's Balanced Scorecard performance management system to inform and guide the work of the Council over the next 5 years. This Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with the budget cycle and any changes to resources and capacity will be reflected in the annual action plan which will also review the progress towards achieving the objectives. A complete evaluation of outcomes and achievements will be undertaken in 2009.

### **In Conclusion**

This is a 5 year strategy which highlights the key objectives for this authority with respect to Economic Regeneration. The strategy will be delivered through the implementation of the attached Action Schedules which identify actions to be take in achieving our objectives along with those partners who can assist us.

Resources will be identified as part of the detailed Action Plans for each phase. These will include internal existing human and financial resources, sources of external funding and key partners

Produced by the Development Team  
Suffolk Coastal District Council, Council Offices,  
Melton Hill, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1AU  
Tel: 01394 444239  
Email: [development@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk](mailto:development@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk](http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk)

or contact Dawn Easter Business, Development & Regeneration Manager

Catherine Thornber, Community Regeneration Manager

Valerie Donovan, Tourism & Resort Manager

Laura Beardsell, Economic & Community Regeneration Officer