



## Quiet Lanes Suffolk

### Technical Case Study

With the support of a core group of volunteers and the Greenprint Forum, and funding from the East Suffolk Community Partnerships, and Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, Suffolk County Council has established more than 400 kilometers of Quiet Lanes in just two years from 2021 to 2023. In addition to those established back in 2013/14 as part of small scale pilot in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, this brings the total extent of quiet lanes now designated in the county of Suffolk to 480.5 km.

Quiet Lanes Suffolk was formed from a small group of volunteers who had initially become interested in the Quiet Lanes scheme for roads in their local parishes. However, it soon became clear that after the initial round of funding for the pilot in 2013/14 had run out, the project had stalled due to cost. The process would cost around £5,000 per Quiet Lane and would have been prohibitive for local parish councils.

Despite this the volunteers were still keen to pursue the concept with the Highways Department, and worked to create a 'community-led' self-help model. By recruiting local volunteers to carry out the majority of the tasks required to designate a road as a Quiet Lane, so that the Highways Department would only have to do the legal and signage work, it would cut costs significantly.

Having already identified a critical mass of parishes interested in quiet lanes to comprise sufficient demand to justify a project based in East Suffolk, they were able to present the concept and the existing known level of interest to the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum at their Travel Conference in 2019 and gained overwhelming support for the proposal as part of the Greenprint Forum's goal of Active Travel. The Greenprint Forum submitted a successful bid for funding on behalf of Quiet Lanes Suffolk, to the then East Suffolk Partnership (now East Suffolk Community Partnerships), which gave the group around £40,000 of initial funding. Then in 2020 the council officers made a successful application to the Suffolk 2020 Fund, a one-year fund of £3 million to be used for Suffolk County Council's policy priorities, for an additional boost of over £200,000 towards Quiet Lanes enabling the project to go countywide. Quiet Lanes would encourage and enhance active and sustainable travel, as well as contribute to the county's drive to become carbon neutral by 2030, and so it fitted the criteria perfectly.

At this point work accelerated in earnest. A trial was initially set up in a handful of villages, then QLS sent out an email to parishes across the county, informing them of the opportunities for funding their own Quiet Lanes that were available. To support parishes who wanted to apply, Quiet Lanes Suffolk created a template for them to follow and placed it on their website for easy access. In less than three months the team received interest from over 130 parishes.

To prevent this level of interest from becoming overwhelming for a relatively small team of volunteers, systems were put in place to help manage the volume, including setting up webforms and placing many resources on line for parishes to use, including templates, help guides, tracking spreadsheets and more. A live digital map was created to allow anybody access to see the progress of whole stages and how it was shaping up across the whole county.





## Key deliverables for a successful Quiet Lanes project

- Establish a constitution for the volunteer group at the start of the project so there is a clear understanding by everyone of what the goal is and the way it should be achieved.
- Utilise the skills of your volunteers and Council officers, The Quiet Lanes Suffolk team had people who brought different things to the table, such as technical knowledge, experience in adult education, an inside understanding of how local councils work, project management, etc.
- Collaboration is essential. Whether that's between volunteers themselves or the volunteers and the councils, building the right relationships can make a huge difference to the success of the project. The trust that has been established between Quiet Lanes Suffolk and the County Council has allowed the work to progress quickly and efficiently.
- Encourage parishes to work with each other. Quiet Lanes Suffolk has seen an unprecedented willingness by parish councils to work together on where lanes would meet across boundaries, establishing signage, pooling funding and even running joint consultations, which has led to a far smoother, more efficient process and a better experience for everyone using the lanes.
- A countywide education programme is very important – if no-one knows what a Quiet Lane is then all the effort will be for nothing. Quiet Lanes Suffolk is working with marketing specialists to run an awareness campaign over the key summer months to inform all road users of what the signs mean and how people should use a Quiet Lane.



### Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council's Quiet Lanes story

Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council's Quiet Lanes journey began in 2018, when they first heard about the project. After some research and looking at whether the Campaign to Protect Rural England could help, they concluded that, as there was no funding available, it was not something they would be able to pursue.

Then in 2020 they received an email from Quiet Lanes Suffolk announcing Suffolk County Council had made money available for Quiet Lanes in the county, and asking parish councils to get in touch if they were interested. They responded almost immediately.

The parish council felt strongly they had an opportunity to create something more than just one Quiet Lane in their area, and thought as they had a number of beautiful lanes with no pavements and mixed road use, it would be good to propose a network of Quiet Lanes. They

spoke with neighbouring parishes Middleton-cum-Fordley, and Theberton and Eastbridge, as the lanes naturally crossed parish boundaries, and together they developed the proposal.

They found the templates and guidance Quiet Lanes Suffolk had created particularly useful, as it made a potentially complicated procedure much simpler. They also benefited from advice given by the Highways department on the placement of signs in places which were both safe and less likely to clutter the local environment.

From the initial declaration of interest in autumn 2020, it took roughly sixteen months to the placement of signs marking the network of Quiet Lanes. Already the Parish Council has noted a greater number of mixed users on the lanes than there were before, and expects more will come following a forthcoming awareness campaign.

“Quiet Lanes were very supportive,” said Edwina Galloway, Vice Chair of the parish council. “To do this as a parish on your own would have been so much more work.”

### **The Volunteer’s Story**

Chris Taylor is involved with Quiet Lanes on two levels. Firstly, as a volunteer with the core Quiet Lanes Suffolk (QLS) project management team, and also as a representative for the Suffolk village of Otley, close to Ipswich.

As a cyclist with a keen interest in promoting active travel, when he first heard about Quiet Lanes he was very interested in bringing it to his own parish, which has many lanes that fit the criteria. This led him to getting involved with QLS, where he was able to help promote the scheme to a far larger audience.

Much of his work within QLS has been to help parishes finalise what they actually wanted to do, guiding them through the two consultation processes (one internal, one formal led by Suffolk Highways). Chris has also been dealing with the signage requirements for the project, researching the best place for signs to be placed, using a combination of Google Street View, Ordnance Survey maps and old-fashioned leg work - cycling to many parishes to assess the situation in person.

Otley now has a network of Quiet Lanes which link with neighbouring parishes, allowing for safer, more active travel routes, including to the local school, from nearby villages. It has also been noticeable that more cyclists and walkers have been coming from outside the area to enjoy the Quiet Lanes.

He feels the relationship between volunteers and officials has been what has made this project so successful. “This is an unusual collaboration between a group of volunteers and a county council, and it’s led to probably the biggest rollout of Quiet Lanes in the country.”