

# Climate Resilient Communities Forum 21.11.2022

## East Suffolk House, Melton

Event report by Daniel Wareing, Secretary of the Greenprint Forum & Environmental Sustainability Officer for East Suffolk Council

Photos by Daniel Wareing, Laurence Moss and Paul Mackie



This event was held by the Greenprint Forum to stimulate a conversation around how communities can increase their resilience in the face of climate change. It was attended by 35 delegates including members of the public as well as representatives of voluntary groups, environmental organisations, business and statutory bodies.

The event was chaired by Jane Healey, Chair of the Greenprint Forum, and hosted by East Suffolk Council.



**Dr Alison Pooley, University of Suffolk**

**“Resilience, Retrofit and the Suffolk Sustainability Institute”**

Alison, our first speaker of the evening, shared with us an insightful quote from Kathryn Janda<sup>1</sup>: “Buildings don’t use energy, people do” to make the point that users of buildings play a critical role in the energy performance of those buildings, and also pointed out that quality affordable housing is an often neglected human right.



Alison gave us a brief introduction to the Suffolk Sustainability Institute (SSI), which officially launches this month. The SSI aims to drive impactful and collaborative climate and sustainability related research and make it accessible to all to help inform climate action to bring tangible benefits at the local, national and global scales – such as the Zero Carbon Britain report.

The SSI hosts the Digitech Smart House – a mini 1-up, 3-down demonstration house and a 1-room demo garden studio made from hemp-lime, with 60% less emissions than a typical starter home. Working with partners including Natural Building Systems Ltd, the house is a research tool to investigate aspects including construction, design, embodied carbon, emissions, air quality and more. The demo buildings underline the importance of embodied carbon as a consideration; buildings lock away carbon in the fabric of the building, so as we decrease the emissions from the use of a building, this increases the relative importance of the carbon embodied within its fabric.

Alison observed that we can view the current energy crisis as a “complementary crisis” to that of climate change, bringing home the importance of measures that improve energy efficiency and thus cut costs for householders. (*Editor’s note: help is available from [Warm Homes Suffolk](#) which can provide fully funded installations of insulation to Suffolk households whose homes have an EPC rating of D or below and an annual income of less than £30,000pa.*)

Alison also talked about the Local Energy Asset Representation<sup>2</sup> (LEAR) for Suffolk which collates and maps data to give an understanding of the buildings in the local area, their energy demands and the energy networks that serve them, whilst also mapping them against some other information on employment, deprivation, home ownership, fuel poverty, and air

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.3763/asre.2009.0050>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.greensuffolk.org/app/uploads/2022/02/Suffolk-Local-Energy-Asset-Representation-Report-v1.2-compressed.pdf>

quality; data that can be of use to local groups to inform their campaigns and projects. The Lower Energy Buildings<sup>3</sup> website is a useful repository of information on buildings including case studies, intended to help inform the planning and development of low-energy new retrofit and refurbishment.

As well as reducing our consumption of energy, what about where the energy we use comes from in the first place? Some communities are exploring opportunities to generate their own energy, for example Heating Bildeston<sup>4</sup> which aims to use ground source heat pumps to power a village-wide heating network.

If the definition of resilience is taken to mean an adaptive response of a system to change, such that the system is better able to cope with future change and that the identity of the system persists over time, then an almshouse community would be an example of a resilient community. The SSI works with UCL on a project exploring how living in almshouses contributes to resilience, which could present local opportunities given that almshouses are relatively prevalent in East Anglia, with the added feature that they are exempt from the Right-to-Buy scheme.

Alison summarised the challenges to resilience and energy-efficient homes as including:

- Sharing good practice across the county
- Accessing knowledge contained in projects and individuals
- The hard to treat and the hard to reach
- Cost effective solutions, access to funding
- Access to expertise and people to do the work in Suffolk
- Education and training
- Supply chain issues
- Where does the funding come from?

and closed her presentation by posing the challenge – if we know how to do this stuff, why aren't we doing it?

Slides from the presentation by Alison are available here: [Presentation 21.11.2022 Dr Alison Pooley Resilience Retrofit SSI UoS](#)

You are welcome to contact Alison via:

[a.pooley@uos.ac.uk](mailto:a.pooley@uos.ac.uk)

[Dr Alison Pooley | University of Suffolk \(uos.ac.uk\)](#)

[Suffolk Sustainability Institute \(SSI\) | University of Suffolk \(uos.ac.uk\)](#)

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lowenergybuildings.org.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.heatingbildeston.uk/about-us>

**Joolz Thompson, iFarm**

### **“Community Climate Action – Writing your Plan”**

Joolz shared with us a quote from Carl Sagan – “Don’t sit this one out. Do something.” I.e. we have a choice to tackle the problem rather than ignore it.



His own personal journey from being someone who never used to think he’d be talking about climate now was triggered by reading the 2018 IPCC report <sup>5</sup> on climate change. Joolz used the questions “Are you scared yet?” and “How bad is it?” to frame the impacts that climate change is already having and will have on our environment and society and the scale to which the climate crisis dwarves the crises of a looming recession and the pandemic of Covid 19.

Joolz told us about the journey of iFarm, which is Community Benefit Society set up to confer community resilience by way of mutual aid to combat social isolation and loneliness in the parishes of Blo Norton, Theltenham and Hopton on the border of Suffolk and Norfolk. iFarm have their own climate action plan and their business is community supported agriculture, horticulture, research and development, education and cultural activities, and is committed to bringing assets into community ownership to steward them for future generations. As a Community Benefit Society, iFarm has an asset lock, meaning that its assets cannot be sold off for profit and ensuring benefits are kept local.

iFarm is building innovative ways of working and community stewardship of land, delivering education and practical action on the Climate & Ecological Emergency through local community planning and networking of practitioners. It has identified stakeholders with whom to develop and deliver solutions, through work with all political parties and levels of local government from Parish, District through to County Councils.

In terms of approaching the writing of a plan:

- Ask yourselves the key question “what can we do?” to identify the areas that your community can actually impact and set boundaries accordingly

<sup>5</sup> Reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are available via <https://www.ipcc.ch/reports/>

- Identify stakeholders with whom to work
- Engage with the community to secure local support and buy-in
- Educate the local community
- Engage with institutions – support and information is out there (e.g. from the Suffolk Sustainability Institute)
- Explore sources of funding
- Make connections with other groups to share best practice and successes – this can include sharing bid writing success – why reinvent the wheel?
- Consider joining up work with neighbouring communities to scale up action. The experience of iFarm illustrates the benefits of scaling up in the three parishes involved.
- Get involved – find out what your local plans, neighbourhood plans etc are, and participate in consultations to help shape the development of local policies. When making objections to planning applications, it can help to refer to a credible alternative solution.

Slides from the presentation by Joolz are available here: [Presentation 21.11.2022 Joolz Thompson Community Climate Action Writing Your Plan](#)

You are welcome to contact Joolz via:

[joolz@ifarm.land](mailto:joolz@ifarm.land)

[BNPC iFarm\\_v1.01.pdf \(norfolkparishes.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Groundwork householder energy advice service**

Amy Coulter delivered a brief update on the work that Groundwork East are delivering on behalf of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, in the form of a householder energy advice service available to householders across Suffolk to provide advice and information to people wishing to improve the efficiency of their homes or look into renewable energy and low-carbon options.

Support is available to every householder in Suffolk – there are no eligibility criteria – and Groundwork aim to provide independent, impartial advice to help people in Suffolk make informed decisions about how they can reduce costs and carbon emissions from their homes.

As part of the service Groundwork offer:

- Free home energy audit survey:  
[www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SuffolkHomeEnergyAudit](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SuffolkHomeEnergyAudit)
- Advice over the phone and/or email to suit your property
- Case studies from real homes in Suffolk
- Advice webinars



## Field to Fork

On behalf of Andy Jolliffe, ESC Communities Officer, who unfortunately could not attend the event, Daniel Wareing relayed the announcement that the ESC Communities Team today launched a new small grants scheme, Field to Fork, aimed at community farms, gardens and allotments to allow them to expand their capacity and engage local people with grow-to-eat projects that feed communities and help people stay active and connected.



**EAST SUFFOLK  
FIELD TO FORK**

**EASE THE  
SQUEEZE**



Through Field to Fork:

- Grants are made available for up to £2000
- The idea is that local people who want to learn how to grow their own food with benefit from the harvest, will volunteer with the project, and that the food will go to those volunteers, local food banks, community pantries, or whatever is most appropriate to the local community;
- Contact our communities team to find out more, via [communities@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:communities@eastsuffolk.gov.uk); deadline for applications is 18 December 2022.

[Field to Fork](#)

## Other funding opportunities

Current funding opportunities for communities in Suffolk driving projects that have a positive environmental impact are collated here [Grants and Funding Opportunities – Green Suffolk](#)

## Workshops and discussion

The main part of our event was a workshop-type discussion bringing small groups of delegates together to generate responses to a set of questions posed by the Steering Group. Following the event we will share the feedback arising from this conversation to attempt to identify areas in which relevant stakeholders can enable action towards climate resilience at the community level.

Each group was asked by the Chair to offer to the wider group, the key points discussed at their respective tables, and the key points raised are as follows (a photographic record of all written notes submitted by attendees can be found at Appendix Two):



### What are you already doing in your community that might be replicable elsewhere?

- Being part of the network of the Greenprint Forum – perhaps something like it could be replicated elsewhere.
- Repair cafes and share gardens. Many examples of repair cafes already exist locally (Halesworth, Martlesham and Woodbridge to mention just a few). In addition to local experience guidance is available from <https://www.repaircafe.org/en/>. Two of the local Community Partnerships have funded the foundation of the Suffolk Repair Shed [Suffolk Repair Shed – repair, re-use, re-cycle](#).
- Thermal imaging camera projects to demonstrate and locate heat loss can help householders in the community target remedial action. The Suffolk Climate Change Partnership currently have thermal imaging cameras for this purpose [Community Thermal Imaging Project – Green Suffolk](#) however they are currently fully booked out until the end of April 2023 so community groups may wish to purchase their own if in a hurry; please contact Claire Ling [claire.ling@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:claire.ling@suffolk.gov.uk) or Henry Stothard [henry.stothard@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:henry.stothard@suffolk.gov.uk) if you need advice.

- Many Parish Councils in the area have made formal declarations in recognition of the Climate Emergency and have produced Action Plans in response.
- Hedge laying exercises involving local members of the community, and identifying trees under threat.
- Beccles Farmers Market going digital, to inform farmers to grow the food they know their customers want and therefore will be able to sell at the market.
- Linking food growing to food banks and community need.

**What does your community aspire to do or see in the future?**

- Solar PV covering public car parks.
- Engage schools on growing and cooking.
- Identify land for use as almshouses, or for the growing of food in the local community for use in the community.

**What are the barriers to progress towards climate resilience in Suffolk, and how can we work together to overcome them?**

- 15 or 20 minute neighbourhoods were an aspiration mentioned by many.
- The challenges are different in urban as opposed to rural areas, for example:
  - The way in which our rural settlements are laid out in relation to themselves, and to other settlements and regional towns and cities makes the 20 minute neighbourhood more challenging in rural areas.
  - Larger urban areas may contain several distinct communities who may have differing priorities, adding the challenge of connecting them together.
  - Some actions take a minimum concentration in order to work effectively, which can be harder to achieve in a dispersed rural area.
  - The culture of the car is more prevalent in rural areas. The connection was made between this and the decoupling of public ownership of public transport, and lack of funding, and interconnectivity, thereof, necessitating car dependency in rural areas.
  - Many local destinations can be inaccessible except by car both for local people and for the visitors from outside the area that we want to attract to benefit the local economy.



- In some communities cohesion can be lacking with differing sections of a community having different values, for example on a cross-generational level. Without cohesion in the community, it can be a barrier to coordination of effective action.
- Intergenerational cooperation was cited as both an aspiration in its own right but also as a means of fostering cohesion in the community.
- Apathy can be an underlying barrier to action, with education a possible means to address the apathy.
- The barrier of the lack of knowledge about what to do can be addressed through knowledge share opportunities.
- The need for legislative change to enable local councils to be more flexible in their action was noted as a barrier inhibiting positive local change. For example, coastal management legislation dates back to 1949; the fact that legislative change requires action by central government builds inertia into the system.
- Anxiety breeds negativity. It is therefore incumbent on those of us trying to affect positive environmental change in our community to maintain positivity so as to inspire others to follow.
- Resistance to change (any form of change) can inhibit progress.
- Lack of funding was cited as a barrier. One way of addressing this may be to further publicise the sources of funding that do exist, and to share through our networks examples of where one community group has written a successful bid for funding.
- Uncertainty about the future of funding was also cited as a barrier, with reference to funding for public schemes with respect to the established political cycle.
- Conflicting priorities can present barriers. However it may be possible to find alignment in priorities that seem, on face value, to be in conflict, and this can take careful communication; for example the complementary challenges of the cost of living crisis and the climate crisis, where action on the former (such as improved home energy efficiency to both save householders fuel costs and reduce emissions) results in positive knock-on action on the latter; in this example, communication might be most effective focusing on the cost benefits to the householder. It's about understanding the priorities and motivators of the people who you are asking to do something.
- The perceived fear of injury on the roads by those using modes of active travel was mentioned as a barrier inhibiting modal shift. Communication and myth busting may help.
- The desire to preserve local heritage was raised as another barrier; for example listed building status and Building Conservation Areas, of which we have many in Suffolk.

- Community action tends to rely on volunteers, and the recruitment and retention of sufficient volunteers with the right expertise can be another barrier.



**A climate resilient Suffolk might look very different to Suffolk in 2022. What sorts of change do you foresee in the movement towards climate resilience in Suffolk?**

- Better quality houses and built environment.
- Better transport solutions with an emphasis on active travel and public transport, with roads needing to change to enable active means of travel to be a viable (and survivable) option.
- 20-minute neighbourhoods the established norm with settlements containing the facilities that everybody needs in the local area and accessible by active or sustainable means of travel.
- Support for coastal communities to relocate in the context of the fastest-changing coastline in Europe – perhaps through the innovation of moveable houses.
- A population armed with the education and knowledge to appreciate the need for change behaviour and how to do it.
- A joined-up narrative that reflects the complementarity of goals that have hitherto been painted by special interest groups as being in conflict with one another.
- A better future would look more rural with more space for nature.
- Communities established with common purpose.

## To what extent should we be willing to accept changes to Suffolk's historical and rural character in the course of our adaptation to and mitigation of climate change at the community level?

- Change can be positive, and for the benefit of those who live in houses that some would prefer to see preserved in aspic. Who really wants to live in a cold draughty Martello Tower that they cannot afford to heat properly?
- It was noted that communities and the way our landscapes look have always changed with time, and will continue to change, and this needs to be recognised. With the impacts of the climate crisis affecting other communities globally in a disproportionate way, more climate refugees will head to areas relatively less affected such as ours and this will accelerate the pace of change of the character of areas like Suffolk.

### Useful links for further help and guidance

- **Community Fridges** – for sharing food resources within the community: [Community Fridge Network \(hubbub.org.uk\)](https://www.hubbub.org.uk) local examples include Saxmundham [SAX Community Fridge | Facebook](#) and Lowestoft [Lowestoft Community Fridge — Food Savvy](#) whilst Woodbridge have a Community Pantry [The Woodbridge Little Free Pantry is ready to open! - Network Suffolk](#)
- **Community led planning** (e.g. parish plans, village reviews, and village design statements) – how to go about it: [Community Led Planning » East Suffolk Council](#)
- **Energy Saving Trust** – consumer information including practical advice on insulation and saving energy [Energy Saving Trust](#)
- **Fareshare** – working with charities to redistribute surplus food to where it is needed: [FareShare | Fighting hunger, tackling food waste in the UK](#)
- **Food Co-ops Toolkit** – more and more communities are setting up food co-ops so they can get good food at an affordable price and have more control over where their food comes from : [Food Co-ops toolkit | Sustain \(sustainweb.org\)](#)
- **Give-and-Take events** – to recirculate resources within the community; our how-to-guide: [Give-Take-Day-How-to-Guide.pdf \(eastsoffolk.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Low Energy Buildings Network** – links to exemplars of good practice in low energy new build and retrofit [Low Energy Buildings | Retrofit for the Future](#)
- **Pathways for Projects** – a suite of resources including films and resources which aims to support communities and groups that are planning for low carbon living: [Pathways for projects | Centre for Sustainable Energy \(cse.org.uk\)](#)
- **Repair Cafes** – what they are and how to organise one: [Home | Repaircafe](#) There are several local examples in Halesworth, Holbrook, Martlesham, Woodbridge and others see the Suffolk Recycling website for the local directory [Repair Cafes - Suffolk Recycling](#)

- **Soil Association** – for information about soils and organics [Soil Association](#)
- **Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service** – for information about wildlife in Suffolk [front | Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service \(suffolkbis.org.uk\)](#)
- **Suffolk Observatory** – a goldmine of local data to evidence the need for local campaigns and action [Suffolk Observatory – Welcome to the Suffolk Observatory](#)
- **Transition Network** – what Transition is (a global movement to aid the transition to low carbon, resilient, socially just society), why and how to do it: [Transition Network | Transition Towns](#) Transition Woodbridge is a superb local example [Transition Woodbridge – Part of the Transition Towns Network](#)
- **Warm Homes Suffolk** – support including fully funded insulation for households with an income of less than £30,000 and in a home of EPC rating D or worse [Warm Homes Suffolk](#)

## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank our speakers Dr Alison Pooley and Joolz Thompson for freely giving their time and imparting their knowledge.

Thank you too to all the stallholders (Coastal partnership East, Fellow Farm, Groundwork East, Save The Deben, Transition Woodbridge, Woodbridge Climate Action Centre) for engaging with and informing attendees.

Thanks to East Suffolk Council for providing the venue free of charge.

And of course we wish to thank all who attended for contributing their questions, participating in the workshop sessions and the group discussion. It was encouraging to hear of the depth and breadth of action already taking place in the various communities represented by attendees and we look forward to ongoing opportunities to engage and share learning through our wider network.



## Appendix one – organisations with representatives in attendance

- **Coastal Partnership East** <https://www.coasteast.org.uk/resilience>
- **East Suffolk Council** - officers representing Communities, Environmental Sustainability, Planning Policy & Delivery, Planning Development Management, and Strategic Management; Cllr Louise Gooch (Kirkley & Pakefield); Cllr Rachel Smith Lyte (Melton) [Home » East Suffolk Council](#)
- **Fellows Farm** [Fellows Farm](#)
- **Greener Peasenhall** [A Greener Peasenhall & Sibton – action for a better environment locally \(home.blog\)](#)
- **Greener Waldringfield** [A Greener Waldringfield](#)
- **Greenprint Forum Steering Group** (present were Betsy Reid, Daniel Wareing, Jane Healey, Laurence Moss, Luke Bennett, Paul Mackie, and Susan Harvey) [Greenprint Steering Group » East Suffolk Council](#)
- **Groundwork East** [East of England - Groundwork](#)
- **iFarm** [BNPC iFarm v1.01.pdf \(norfolkparishes.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Ipswich and District United Nations Association** [UNA Ipswich & District | UNA UK](#)
- **Martlesham Climate Action Group** [Home » Martlesham Climate Action \(onesuffolk.net\)](#)
- **Martlesham Parish Council** [Welcome to Martlesham Council » Martlesham Council \(onesuffolk.net\)](#)
- **Melton Parish Council** [Melton Parish Council – Suffolk, UK \(melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Nacton Community Council** [Community Council \(suffolk.cloud\)](#)
- **Natural Building Systems Ltd** [Natural Building Systems](#)
- **Save The Deben** [Save the Deben | Facebook](#)
- **Suffolk County Council** [Our climate emergency declaration | Suffolk County Council](#)
- **Suffolk Sustainability Institute** [Suffolk Sustainability Institute \(SSI\) | University of Suffolk \(uos.ac.uk\)](#)
- **Transition Woodbridge** [Transition Woodbridge – Part of the Transition Towns Network](#)
- **University of Suffolk** [University of Suffolk \(uos.ac.uk\)](#)
- **Woodbridge Climate Action Centre** [Woodbridge Climate Action Centre | Facebook](#)
- **Woodbridge Town Council** [Home \(woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk\)](#)

## Appendix two – notes from workshops

This is a complete photographic record of all contemporaneous notes submitted by attendees during the workshop session of our evening.













