

# EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN

## 2015 - 2023



## CASE STUDY

ENABLING COMMUNITIES - ECONOMIC GROWTH

# AFFORDABLE BROADBAND

As a specific ambition, our Business Plan states that the Council will hold the Better Broadband for Suffolk Partnership to account to deliver their commitment of 100% roll out of superfast broadband in Suffolk by 2020; and to provide further financial support from the Council to ensure that connection is affordable, particularly in more remote and rural areas.

[eastsuffolk.gov.uk/east-suffolk-business-plan](http://eastsuffolk.gov.uk/east-suffolk-business-plan)



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Beccles Library, Blyburgate, Beccles  
Felixstowe Library, Crescent Road, Felixstowe  
Marina Centre, Marina, Lowestoft  
Woodbridge Library, New Street, Woodbridge

# ENSURING AFFORDABLE HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND IN RURAL AREAS



## WHAT WE DID?

In July 2013, the Suffolk Coastal Scrutiny Committee agreed to review broadband provision in the district and 'enquire how efficiently and how soon improved broadband provision can be extended to the whole district, with particular regard to remote and rural areas, and to explore other available options'. Since then, the Committee has pursued improvements in the provision of affordable broadband to those residents and businesses which would not otherwise receive an effective service under the planned roll-out schedules of the Better Broadband for Suffolk Project. Whilst the aim of the project is 100% coverage of the county with superfast fibre broadband, it has been acknowledged that there will be 2-3% of properties which will remain without access to reasonable broadband when the current project ends in 2020. The Committee wanted to ensure that, where possible, affordable coverage to 'not-spots' was dealt with; wireless coverage was possible in East Anglia providing signals were transmitted on a line-of-sight basis. Extended wireless links required the use of strategically positioned towers. An independent Community Interest Company (CIC) was formed to use linking infrastructure, notably transmission masts, by commercial suppliers of wireless broadband services.

In 2015, money raised by the CIC helped to bring a disused communications mast at Martlesham back into use, enabling wireless broadband to be transmitted to nearby properties. Money received from Councillors' Enabling Communities Budgets helped the refurbishment of a disused mast in Clopton in 2016. Using the signal from the Martlesham mast, a wireless service was transmitted to local rural homes. Further connection via Tunstall Church Tower and additional proposals for a mast at Bawdsey will allow a wireless link to reach further north.

## WHY WE DID IT?

Access to high-speed broadband is vital for sustained economic growth and the continued development of strong local economies, particularly in rural areas. The delivery of commercial and public services is increasingly dependant on reliable internet access – for example, access for education and skills, employment opportunities, online services such as banking, health services and, of course, the Council's own digital strategies to provide an easily accessible, online customer service at reduced cost. Cost-effective broadband is a key infrastructure requirement which helps the resilience of rural communities and the longer-term prospects of current and future generations. The importance of, and access to, alternative connectivity is vital. An effective communications infrastructure for east Suffolk is key given its role in the county and regional economies as well as the opportunities for growth.



HIGH-SPEED  
BROADBAND IS VITAL  
FOR SUSTAINED  
ECONOMIC GROWTH

*"Scrutiny is a positive activity which contributes to the delivery of efficient and effective services that meet the needs and aspirations of local communities. We, the Committee, wanted to help some of the last, small percentage of local residents to have affordable broadband provision sooner than might otherwise have been possible.."*



## THE DIFFERENCE THIS MADE?

As well as the rural wireless service, the Council's Cabinet established an Enabling Broadband Programme in June 2017 with the aim of further supporting those communities likely to be in the 2-3% without access to an affordable high speed broadband service. £200,000 has been identified to support this programme and to ensure that it helps to expand the availability of high speed broadband, these included:

- Planning – ensuring improved provision of broadband to new homes especially small or medium sized developments where there is no statutory requirement to provide broadband as a utility.
- Economic Development – through Business Associations and other networks identifying opportunities for growth related to broadband provision.
- Communities – working with the five Local Area Coordinators for Suffolk Coastal to build relationships that aid engagement and communication with target communities.

An Enabling Broadband Programme website with links to all relevant up-to-date information on the development and implementation of programme schemes as well as links to broadband related information and services.

[www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/enabling-better-broadband-in-suffolk-coastal/](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/enabling-better-broadband-in-suffolk-coastal/)