

**January 2025**

## **Suffolk Business Board Update: Former LEP Functions and Programmes**

### **Background**

As required by government, functions of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) were integrated into Suffolk County Council on 1st April 2024. These functions continue to operate, delivered by the Council in partnership with Norfolk County Council. These activities cover a range of initiatives and support areas including skills and careers, sector development, business support, innovation and investment.

To successfully implement the new Suffolk economic strategy, a series of programmes and investments will be required. These will range from schemes to improve skills, business support, providing companies with advice and investment, funding to support areas where there is market failure, for example funding for start-ups, through to infrastructure investments to unlock growth. These may include some existing or legacy programmes from the LEP, operated in conjunction with Norfolk.

The majority of the former LEP-programmes and functions have continued to operate on a Norfolk and Suffolk wide basis during 2024-25, supported by the local authorities (county and district) via various funding pots (UKSPF, LEP, central government e.g. DCMS, DSIT, DBT and local authorities). These include;

- Growth Hub (with Norfolk)
- Sectors – ORE Catapult (energy), Agri Tech Launchpad, Space East, NAAME (manufacturing), Create Growth (creative industries), LVEP (tourism)
- Inward Investment – Invest Norfolk and Suffolk programme and Norfolk Suffolk Unlimited promotional campaigns
- Innovation - IGMP, Connected Innovation, Eagle Labs (tech start-ups)
- Investment and High Growth Support – New Anglia Capital, HALO Programme, North Star (SCC high growth support) with various small grants available
- Skills – Boot camps, sector specific plans, Multiply
- Sustainability (clean growth) – various grants and advice programmes

Most programmes are time limited though and many cease during 2025 so plans and business cases have been developed to ensure ongoing delivery, where the programmes are deemed to be delivering effective outcomes.

### **Delivery of Programmes and Functions 2025-26**

With Norfolk and Suffolk Business Boards and Economic Strategies now in place, both Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils are committed to joint delivery of programmes and functions wherever possible and where there is opportunity for maximum impact on economic growth, jobs and sustainability.

Officers from Suffolk County Council and Norfolk County Council continue to meet on a regular basis to ensure alignment of strategy and priorities and programme delivery. Officers have

prepared detailed business cases and proposals for each of the former LEP functions and programmes with the intention of continued delivery at least for 2025-26 where it makes sense to do so. Growth Hub has not been included in this as further work is required across Partners to confirm proposals here. This item will come to March Business Board.

The following updates provide a position on progress for 2024-25 and confirm plans for 2025-26:

## **1. Skills Bootcamp Programme and Careers Hub**

Suffolk County Council leads on the delivery of the Norfolk and Suffolk Bootcamp Programme on behalf of both County Councils. This is part of an arrangement which sees Norfolk County Council take the lead for the delivery of the 'Careers Hub' across both counties, another former LEP function relating to skills. To ensure that both County Councils remain able to steer delivery in their areas, the delivery of both programmes is overseen through Governance arrangements involving senior officers from both Norfolk and Suffolk County Council known as the 'Skills Hub'. Officers involved in directly delivering the programmes are embedded within respective County Council skills teams.

### **a. Norfolk and Suffolk Bootcamps Programme**

Skills Bootcamps are short employer led programmes of training for adults (aged 19 or over) aimed at meeting business needs. The training is procured on both a national and a local level and delivered by training providers, offering flexible training solutions, with many being delivered remotely and online. They aim to help individuals move into employment, grow their business if self-employed, or into a new role with new responsibilities if already employed, at the same time as equipping our businesses with the skills they need.

The Department for Education (DfE) is providing Suffolk County Council with over £2m to manage and deliver bootcamp provision across both Norfolk and Suffolk in 24/25.

The SCC bootcamp team is also overseeing the finalising of outcomes from our previous 'waves' of delivery (in 23/24) as well as preparations for 'Wave 6' in 25/26.

Bootcamp Programmes have been locally commissioned in Norfolk and Suffolk since August 2022 resulting in hundreds of vacancies being filled, new contracts for the self-employed and employees gaining progression or new responsibilities.

### **Current Performance and Impact**

**Wave 5 (24/25):** As of the end of December 2024, 391 learners across Norfolk and Suffolk had enrolled and started their training through the latest 'wave' (for delivery in financial year 2024/25) of locally managed Skills Bootcamps. We are therefore confident of achieving the 560 learner starts across 9 key sectors originally estimated at the start of the wave. Through the bootcamp programme 18 providers are offering training in various locations across the 2 counties as well as through remote, online learning in over 30 subject areas including construction, coding, digital, early years, engineering, welding, offshore wind technicians, HGV, land-based, education, green skills, logistics, care, leadership and management.

According to the latest information available from the Department for Education the Norfolk and Suffolk Bootcamp Programme for 24/25 is performing very well (4<sup>th</sup> in the country in terms of % achieved against initial targets) in relation to learner starts.

Information will be gathered over the course of 2025 regarding the outcomes for these learners (e.g. employment, career/employment progression) and the benefits for businesses (e.g. recruitment and growth) in order to be able to report back on the resulting impact of the training offered.

**Wave 4 (23/24):** Information on the impact of the previous wave of bootcamp provision (wave 4 in 23/24) will be finalised before the next Suffolk Business Board to allow for a fuller picture of impact to be provided but the following bullets provide an initial high-level summary.

- 541 learner starts (outperforming expectations of 496)
- Anticipating that final data from providers will confirm:
  - 78% of learners completed their course (slightly lower than the 80% target)
  - 65% of learners who completed their programme achieving a positive ‘outcome’ as a result of their training within 6 months of completion (lower than the 75% target)

The performance of the 23/24 Bootcamp Programme is in line with many other areas of the country with the Norfolk and Suffolk Bootcamp Programme in ‘midtable’ in the national information provided by the Department for Education (DfE). The reason for the lower % in relation to final positive outcomes is primarily due to the difficulties providers have in maintaining contact with learners after the completion of training. The % of actual positive outcomes resulting from bootcamp provision is therefore likely to be much higher than the % of confirmed positive outcomes. We are looking to work with providers to try to identify ways of improving the rate of return for Wave 5.

## **Future Plans**

In summer 2024, SCC submitted proposals to the DfE for further Skills Bootcamps delivery totalling £4.1m for Norfolk and Suffolk in the 2025/6 funding year. This proposal would result in the delivery of programmes to 1,345 learners across 14 sectors from Agriculture to the Visitor Economy, aligned to the requirements of the regional economy.

Although we are awaiting formal confirmation from Government there is confidence within the system that the local delivery of the Bootcamp Programme will continue. We will update the Board as and when the allocation for Norfolk and Suffolk is confirmed.

### **a. Careers Hub**

The Careers Hub is a national policy but delivered locally by local authorities. It is delivered by Norfolk County Council on behalf of both Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils to bring together local schools, colleges and providers with employers from a wide range of industries across the economy with the aim of enhancing the provision of careers education across the area. The hub supports schools and colleges to measure themselves against, and achieve, the ‘Gatsby benchmarks’ which help to determine how adequately each institution is preparing their young people for their next steps.

The Gatsby Benchmarks – 8 benchmarks that can be used to determine the quality and breadth of a school or college’s Careers, Education, Information Advice and Guidance.

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from careers and labour market information

3. Addressing the needs of each student
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

This benchmark data is used to complement and help inform, but not replace, the work that Suffolk County Council is already undertaking to enhance the provision and quality of careers guidance in Suffolk and ultimately help address increasing rates of those not in education, employment or training. This includes supporting the professional development of careers leaders and advisers through an ongoing programme, directly supporting schools to understand and fulfil their statutory duties, ensuring and looking to continuously enhance the provision for specific or disadvantaged groups including care leavers, providing labour market information resources for educational institutes and information on pathways and technical routes such as apprenticeships.

The Careers Hub currently supports 145 institutions (an increase of 3 on previous reports), this includes mainstream, SEND, Alternative Provision and Further Education institution as well as 98 Enterprise Advisors (EAs). These EAs are volunteers from employers across industry in Norfolk and Suffolk who are matched to settings to support schools to enhance their careers strategies and employer engagement.

Between July 2024 and November 2024, the average number of benchmarks that Norfolk and Suffolk settings were fully achieving rose slightly from 4.9 to 5.1 (out of 8) and 88% of settings are now achieving at least 3 benchmarks (up from 86%).

## **Future Plans**

The Careers Hub work is co-funded by Government (through the Careers and Enterprise Company) and Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. Current funding and delivery arrangements are in place until August 2025. Discussions are ongoing as to what arrangements could look like beyond August 2025. Both Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council are engaging with other local areas to ensure a wide understanding of delivery models and with the Careers and Enterprise Company on funding. Ideally, we would want to continue this work beyond August as there is no other means of assessing the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance being delivered.

## **2. Sector Development, Innovation and Investment**

New Anglia LEP was responsible for coordinating, championing and hosting a range of sector development, inward investment, innovation and business support programmes as well partnership boards and initiatives to help drive economic growth across key sectors in Norfolk and Suffolk. This was often in collaboration with wider geographical stakeholders in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Lincolnshire and beyond.

The activities and partnerships cover various key sectors. Examples of sector focused partnerships and networks include; advanced manufacturing (NAAME), agri-food (Agri-food Industry Council), digital tech (Council for Digital Tech/Tech East), clean energy (All Energy Industry Council/EEEGR), innovation (N&S Innovation Board), Space East and Connected Innovation.

Underpinning these are a range of targeted programmes that leverage external funds to enhance business support and innovation activities and strengthen supply chains across some of the key sectors. These include;

- Barclays Eagle Labs (tech start up support),
- Halo (angel investment support via Anglia Capital Group),
- Innovation Grant Mentoring Programme (to support grant applications e.g. IUK), North Star (SCC/MENTA pilot to support high growth),
- Create Growth (creative industries mentoring/investment readiness),
- Agri-Tech Launchpad (investment/grants),
- Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult (Fit4 and Connect programmes).

As noted previously, where there are opportunities to continue to collaborate across wider geographical areas to support sector growth then Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils are committed to doing so.

### **Future Plans – An Overview**

Each one of the main sector-development, business support, investment and innovation related functions and programmes has been reviewed by Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils. Agreements are in place to either continue these for 2025/26 (to the end of March 2026) or to make changes or stop delivery.

The following table provides an overview of these functions and programmes including any expected funding allocation from Suffolk County Council for 2025-26, expected outcomes/benefits and how they link to the main priorities and objectives within the new Suffolk Economic Strategy.

<b>Function/ Programme</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Continue / Change / Stop</b>	<b>Investment 25/26</b>	<b>Benefits and Link to Economic Strategy (ES)</b>
Former LEP Grant Programmes	Growth Through Innovation (GTI) and Business Transition to Net Zero	Norfolk and Suffolk	Stop	Redirection of funds into new Suffolk grant programme	<i>ES: Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Attracting Investment</i>
Innovation Board (IB) and Connected Innovation Programme (CI)	IB provides strategic regional leadership for innovation. CI is the programme - network of 27+ innovation hubs, universities & clusters with focus on cross-sector innovation and investment	N&S (hosted by NCC)	Continue - but aim to undertake a full review in 25/26	Suffolk - £100K including 1 FTE post.  £100K match from Norfolk.	<i>ES: Delivers Tech Convergence; Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Attracting Investment</i>  Enhanced innovation ecosystem and tech convergence activity. Business support and investment/grants for innovation. Stronger strategic relationship with Innovate UK, DSIT, DBT, Catapults etc
Space East	East of England space cluster, 1 of 15 formally recognised UK space clusters by UKSA.	Initially Norfolk and Suffolk. Now covers East of England (6 counties)  (hosted by SCC)	Change – expand to include additional Counties in the coalition	Suffolk - £93,500 including 2 FTE posts. Norfolk £25K. Essex and Cambs £25K TBC. Herts in-kind. UKSA match TBC approx £100k	<i>ES: Delivers Tech Convergence; Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Attracting Investment; Talent Development; Boosting Infrastructure and Connectivity</i>  Opportunity to engage regional businesses with the £19bn UK space sector. 220+ membership. leveraged £4m+ of project funding.  Significant tech convergence and cross-sector and sustainability opportunities. New Quantum Optical Lab and Space Enterprise Lab at Adastral Park.

Generate (Energy sector)	Inward investment and trade promotional campaign	Norfolk, Suffolk & Essex (SCC host BDM)	Continue	Suffolk - £30K (+£30K each from Norfolk and Essex)	<i>ES: Attracting Investment; Driving Enterprise and Innovation. High Growth Sector.</i>  Inward investment leads and supply chain opportunities – focus on offshore wind, nuclear, hydrogen
Tech East and Council for Digital Tech	Development and promotion of digital sector.	Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambs (SCC and SCoC hosts)	Continue – but seek further opportunities to consolidate activities	Suffolk - £20k  Other funding from LAs, universities and industry (Tech East patrons)	<i>ES: Attracting Investment; Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Talent Development; Boosting Infrastructure and Connectivity; Tech Convergence. Emerging Growth Sector.</i>  Inward investment attraction. Promotion of digital tech adoption and skills across key sectors. Promotion of tech vertical opportunities . e.g. fintech, gaming
New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering (NAAME)	Development and promotion of the advanced manufacturing sector and local networks.	Norfolk and Suffolk (NCC host)	Continue - Potential to expand under new EoE Made Smarter programme	Suffolk - £28.6K  Match from Norfolk.	<i>ES: Attracting Investment; Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Talent Development; Tech Convergence. Value Growth Sector.</i>  350 membership across key clusters. Opportunities for innovation and productivity gains. Boost supply chain and job opps./ training
Agri-Food Industry Council (AFIC) and Agri-Tech Launchpad	Strategic leadership for sector. AgriTech Launchpad for Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambs, Lincs – business investment/ growth programme	Norfolk & Suffolk (AFIC) (NCC host)	Continue	No further funding for Launchpad at this stage.	<i>ES: Attracting Investment; Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Talent Development. High Growth Sector.</i>  £7.5m leveraged into region from Launchpad.
Barclays Eagle Labs (tech start ups)	Dedicated programme to support tech start-ups and founders in collaboration with	Norfolk & Suffolk (SCC is the	Potential to continue (subject to evaluation	Current funding from Barclays to	<i>ES: Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Talent Development; Attracting Investment; Tech Convergence. Emerging Growth Sector.</i>

	SCC, NCC, Connected Innovation, Akcela and Innovation Labs	accountable body)	and future funding)	end March 25. Awaiting confirmation on future funding.	Support for founders and early-stage ICT tech businesses. Bursary grant support for founders disadvantaged financially.
High Growth Business Support (North Star)	North Star pilot programme to provide a bespoke Information, Diagnostics and Brokerage service for Suffolk based businesses.	Suffolk only (Norfolk NCC has a separate high growth scheme)	Continue	Current £165K funds from DBT to end March 25. DBT funding confirmed for 25/26 so plan to continue.	<i>ES: Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Attracting Investment.</i>  Targeted engagement with businesses with high growth potential, seeking investment, advice and support
Innovation Grant Mentoring Programme (IGMP)	IGMP inspires and promotes innovation funding and supports businesses working on innovation funding proposals, through Innovation Mentoring, Bid Writing Coaching + delivering innovation webinars and workshop sessions	Norfolk & Suffolk (hosted by NCC)	Continue	Suffolk - £60K  Match from Norfolk	<i>ES: Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Attracting Investment.</i>  Supported over 400 businesses over past 4 years and helped secure £2.7m of innovation funding.
Norfolk Suffolk Unlimited	Dedicated Norfolk and Suffolk Inward Investment Team providing an enquiry response service, lead	Norfolk and Suffolk (staff hosted by SCC and NCC)	Potential to continue (subject to evaluation and future funding)	Suffolk - £50K  Match from Norfolk	<i>ES: Attracting Investment.</i>  Inward investment successes for Suffolk include GCB Cocoa (Sudbury) and Assan Panel (Stowmarket)

	generation activity and contact with DBT				
Specialist innovation, investment and supply chain programmes	<p>Various – examples ;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ACG Halo Angel Investment</li> <li>b. Catapult Programmes e.g. Fit4, Connect etc.</li> <li>c. Create Growth</li> <li>d. Agri-Tech Launchpad</li> </ul>	Norfolk and Suffolk	Potential to continue (subject to evaluation and future funding)	Short term pilots – future funding to be confirmed	<p><i>ES: Driving Enterprise and Innovation; Talent Development; Attracting Investment; Tech Convergence.</i></p> <p>Various</p>

Please note that the Growth Hub function and service delivery will be covered in a separate paper to the Suffolk Business Board.