

Suffolk Coast & Heaths

Autumn/Winter 2018/2019

FREE

Suffolk Coast & Heaths

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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Learn about conservation projects such as GeoSuffolk p2, Healthy Estuaries p4, Undergrounding electricity cables p7, the future of farming p9 and Swifts p13

Orford Castle © Justin Minns

Beachwatch in Suffolk and the Blue Planet Effect

Blue Planet II has worked wonders in raising the issue of plastic pollution amongst the public, industry and government, and the last few months have seen some monumental changes to begin addressing the problem, with much

more on the horizon. Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB have been supporting the Marine Conservation Society for many years in their anti-litter campaigns and Beachwatch programme. We are now seeing lots more volunteers and organisations signing up to the scheme prompted by the ground-breaking BBC series.

The Beachwatch Suffolk Results 2017 summarise another year of fantastic achievements by our Beachwatch and Great British Beach Clean volunteer teams in the AONB. Compared to 2016, there was an increase of just over 200 volunteers participating, but interestingly there was a significant reduction in the amount of litter items

removed from our beaches. Obviously various factors are involved, but it would be wonderful to think that people are disposing of their rubbish more responsibly. It will be interesting to see what the 2018 Results identify...

Anyone can take part in Beachwatch and the annual Great British Beach Clean. Volunteers carry out surveys of 100m of beach or foreshore at quarterly intervals through the year, or as part of the annual international event each September. More information www.mcsuk.org and AONB website.

Lynn Allen, AONB Countryside Projects Officer



A Message from Our Chairman



I am proud to chair the AONB Partnership, who provide an 'outstanding' level of service to people, landscapes and wildlife within the designated landscape. Yes these are 'interesting times'. On page 8 the manager of the staff team tells us more about the Defra Review of Designated Landscapes, and the review of our southern boundary of the AONB.

We continue to focus attention on the growing planning and development pressures on our landscapes. Not only are there major infrastructure developments such as Sizewell C, Scottish Power Renewables and interconnectors, but ongoing proposals for housing developments have a visual impact and add recreational pressure. We have responded to this increase in workload and have recruited a full-time AONB Planning Officer following a prioritisation survey of funding partners and a subsequent rejig of our resources (meet her on page 7).

We are saddened to report the death of Sue Allen, Vice-Chair of our Partnership, this year. My abiding memory of her is in our Partnership meetings, enthusiastically supporting our activities but also challenging us to do more.

Sue would have been helping us with the completion of the 2018-23 AONB Management Plan. We'll talk more about this in the next issue, but while working on the new plan we find ourselves reviewing the previous five years. I am proud, as Sue would have been, of the many things we have accomplished, such as: completion of the £1.1m HLF project Touching the Tide; undergrounding cables at Sutton Hoo and Shotley (see more on page 7); several saltmarsh restoration projects; hundreds of beach cleans (see front cover); grant support for projects that meet the aspirations of the Management Plan, worth an average of £75k per year (updates on page 12-15); producing AONB Partnership Position Statements, including on obtrusive lighting and developments in the setting of the AONB; plus numerous publications to promote the outstanding place that is east Suffolk! Visitor numbers have increased significantly too, boosting the economy in the last couple of years by an additional 6% to £210m.

I was glad to be re-elected as AONB Chairman and look forward to another three years of championing the work of the AONB and Partnership and being part of our 50th anniversary since AONB designation in 2020. We are already thinking about how we should celebrate this landmark by doing something that could be in place for another 50 years – ideas welcome!

Councillor David Wood, Chairman Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership

Square Jawed and Craggy!

Each year since 2014 has seen the incredible Suffolk Coast & Heaths Volunteers undertake Work Parties to achieve valuable geological conservation work. All this work has been achieved under the expert guidance of GeoSuffolk, the county's very own organisation that works hard to promote understanding and appreciation of Suffolk's fascinating landscape and geology.

Through our connection with GeoSuffolk AONB Volunteers and staff have explored the bumps and hollows of the AONB. As GeoSuffolk website says: 'We've explored subtropical seas and an ancestral River Thames and discovered how deeply Suffolk was refrigerated by the Ice Age. We have wondered at the beautiful shingle beaches of our coast and marvelled at the fossil teeth of the world's largest shark, found in Suffolk 'crag'.' www.geosuffolk.co.uk



AONB and GeoSuffolk at Ramsholt cliff

Recently much effort has focused on Red Crag sites. We've dug out a small pit close to the wonderful Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Rockhall Wood, Sutton. An article on this 'geosite' is published in a past volume of *Earth Heritage Magazine*. 'Clearing the Craggs at Sutton Knoll' chronicles the clearance of the Coralline Crag exposures at the SSSI to create what must now be one of the finest soft rock exposures in the south of England.

In January 2018 we cleared vegetation from part of one of the Red Crag pits in Ramsholt. The strata were rich in phosphate nodules and there were two shelly beds from which we collected examples of the fossil mollusc fauna.

The spades of the AONB Volunteers will be biting into the Crag again soon. Do join us!

Neil Lister, AONB Countryside Projects Officer

Releasing the Sutton Hoo Story

The National Trust's Sutton Hoo will be closing until Spring 2019 in order for major transformative works to take place across the site. A £4million project is being made possible by a £1.8million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and thanks to the generosity of National Trust members and supporters through donations and fundraising.

The project, called 'Releasing the Sutton Hoo Story', will enable the National Trust to create an experience that helps visitors discover more about this internationally significant site and how its stories have captured the imaginations of people the world over.

During the closure period volunteers and staff will be out and about around Suffolk with the Sutton Hoo Roadshow visiting supermarkets, libraries, schools and other venues. There will also be talks run by the volunteer community talks team and a selection of children's talks and activities being organised by the Sutton Hoo education staff and volunteers.

The stunning replica helmet, buckle and shoulder clasp will be on display and the team will be on hand to talk about the site – both its fascinating history and its exciting future – as well as discussing their experience of volunteering at Sutton Hoo and the large variety of volunteer roles available. Information at www.nationaltrust.org.uk/suttonhoo.

Allison Girling, Property Operations Manager

Sue Allen

Our Sue Allen, who died suddenly in April 2018, was a great supporter of the AONB. She served as the AONB Partnership's Vice Chair since 2015 having first become a Southwold & Reydon local councillor 14 years ago, and Mayor. She was a very active community supporter and ran businesses in and around Southwold, after a career that included the BBC in London.

Amongst her achievements during her time as a councillor were successfully pushing for major funding to rebuild the Southwold Harbour walls, negotiating the development of affordable housing projects and raising extensive funding for Southwold amenities. She always saw the environment as important to her own and others' wellbeing and was an active representative on Southwold Harbour and River Blyth Estuary Users Association and the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board.

Simon Amstutz, AONB Manager



Artists impression of the Sutton Hoo viewing tower

© National Trust, Nissen Richards

A New Lease of Life

Marsh Farm in Blaxhall is a floodplain grazing marsh along the banks of the River Alde. While carrying out an assessment of the area for Langmead Farms (who own the site), Suffolk Wildlife Trust put together a plan to improve the marsh for wintering waders and wildfowl as well as improving its general biodiversity.



The plan from Suffolk Wildlife Trust suggested creating scrapes and gutters and improving the existing ditch network. This would enable water to be held on the land for longer periods and create better connectivity between the floodplain and the River Alde. Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust secured £7,500 from the Environment Agency to fund the improvements and the work was carried out in May 2018.

The created scrapes and gutter have once again blended in with the surrounding area as plants begin to colonise the bare earth and will now provide a great habitat for birds this winter. Langmead Farms have been very supportive of this project and all the partners are very pleased to see it completed and increasing the diversity of the East Suffolk Catchment area. We look forward to working in partnership with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Langmead Farms on similar projects in the future.

Jane Herbert, Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust



Marsh Farm Blaxhall

Next Steps for the England Coast Path

Up-to-date research shows that people made 29.2 million walking trips on English coastal paths in 2017 – and that they contributed an extra £351m to local economies. The England Coast Path will provide new and improved access around Suffolk's coastline as part of a new National Trail around the coast of England. This will add to the access network in the AONB opening up new areas for walkers wanting to enjoy anything from a short stroll to a long trek. This work is being undertaken by Natural England, the government's adviser for the natural environment.

The Natural England local team in Suffolk is talking with local organisations, landowners and managers who know the area ensuring the route provides the best outcomes for both the public and wildlife. In late 2018 the proposals for the coast from Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea and also the Stour Estuary will be published. This will be the first step in establishing the path around the entire Suffolk coast. There will be an opportunity for anyone with an interest in these proposals to give their comments on them. When the route is approved by Government Suffolk County Council will prepare it for opening, and manage and maintain it into the future as part of the family of National Trails in England.

If you want to find out more about the England Coast Path in Suffolk you can check progress at www.gov.uk/englandcoastpath, email eastcoastalaccess@naturalengland.org.uk or phone 0208 026 1753.

Jonathan Clarke, England Coast Path Delivery Team



Family on the Suffolk Coast Path

© Natural England



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What is the Value of Nature?

Despite every effort, the natural environment has progressively declined over the past 70 years. Conservationists refute environmental degradation is necessary or acceptable, with many seeking to halt or even reverse this alarming trend. In recent years, the 'natural capital approach' has emerged as a potential ally in the fight for environmental endurance.

My role is to understand what the 'natural capital approach' is and how it might work in practice. Of primary concern is the need to place the environment higher in the minds of decision makers to ensure the beauty and functionality of our natural world will be nurtured rather than eroded.

This is a complex problem that necessitates questioning; 'What should be done about a declining environment?' and 'Why is action necessary?', but also 'How can we value nature?' and importantly, the question of 'Is valuing nature *right*'?

Decision making is based on weighing up economic arguments. The option with the greatest net benefit often wins out. Currently, nature doesn't have a readily assignable value and so it struggles to 'win out' in the decision making process. We know the environment underpins our way of life but this value is hard to ascribe because the benefit (natural capital) is offered without money changing hands. Use of air quality, clean water, wildlife and landscape have allowed all humans to better ourselves without direct cost, whether directly (farming for example) or indirectly through sense of place.

It is uncomfortable for us to think about the environment in monetary terms, principally because we have never had to pay for natural capital. This is not to say the natural world is for sale, rather that there is a need to recognise its place in our economy. The issues we face, and the relative lack of success with other initiatives to date, have prompted these questions and we ask *if* it is possible to consider the natural environment in economic terms and to make a stronger argument in decision making.

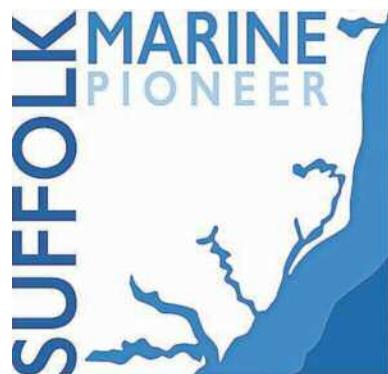
There are no easy answers, with debate in the national press between, amongst others, Tony Juniper (head of WWF) and George Monbiot (Guardian Columnist). One point of agreement is that the awareness of the issue needs to be broadened. Regardless of your perspective, each argument raises interesting points that are being explored right here in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

Further information on Natural Capital and the project exploring these ideas are at: www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/projects-and-partnerships/suffolk-marine-pioneer.

Peter Cosgrove, Suffolk Marine Pioneer



River Deben



Striving for Healthy Estuaries

Natural England has recently published *Healthy Estuaries 2020: An Assessment of Estuary Morphological Equilibrium*, which looks at Alde-Ore Estuary, Deben Estuary and Hamford Water.

Healthy Estuaries is an approach that produces a comparison between the current shape of the estuary, against what theory suggests the estuary should look like. It looks at the shape from the mouth to its head and the processes that are acting on it. The work enables an appreciation of the longer-term sustainability of estuary systems to address coastal squeeze and inform other important management decisions. It provides a tool which when used in combination with local knowledge, historical analysis and expert interpretation can provide useful insights into the possible outcomes of future changes such as sea level rise on sensitive areas.

Coastal squeeze is intertidal habitat loss, notably saltmarsh, but also inter-tidal mud, shingle, dunes, etc, that arises when they are caught between rising seas and fixed, man-made flood defences. In these situations habitats can't migrate landward, as they would do naturally, so are 'squeezed' out, either by direct loss to advancing wave action or by 'drowning' under rising tides.

Estuaries are inherently complex, with uncertainty attributed to appreciating all the intricacies of intra-estuary health. The Healthy Estuaries work is not a panacea for understanding estuary health however it does help the advancement in our understanding of these systems. It is one part of a range of instruments to help understand estuary health at a landscape scale, as well as appreciating natural and human constraints on estuary shape and potential locations to make the estuary shape more sustainable.

It provides an analysis of current data in an objective way, thus allowing for a more focused and evidence-based discussion with relevant stakeholders including the Alde-Ore Estuary and Deben Estuary Partnerships.

Full report: publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6740319341379584

Emma Hay, Land Management & Conservation Adviser, Natural England



Havergate Island to Shingle Street

East Suffolk Priority Catchment



Eroded soil entering the River Tang through surface water drains on Church Road. The Tang discharges into the Butley River near RSPB Boyton and Hollesley Marshes.

mapped in-stream structures that are impassable to fish and monitored water levels across this very dry summer. Over the next six months we plan to build on their existing projects in the area, most notably the Yellow Fish campaign with Groundwork East, which will hopefully be extended into the AONB. The campaign has the tag line "only rain down the drain" and aims to reduce the amount of pollution entering freshwater drains and ending up in our rivers and estuaries.

We are always looking for new opportunities and would love to speak to you if you have any ideas about how to improve waterbodies within the AONB. You can get in contact by email trev.bond@environment-agency.gov.uk or phone 020 3025 8510.

Trev Bond, Environment Agency

A new initiative by the Environment Agency is focussing on waterbodies in East Suffolk, many of which are failing their targets for water quality. A combination of diffuse pollution from farming and point source pollution from sewage treatment works are thought to be responsible. To address these issues, the Environment Agency has deployed two Priority Catchment Officers to the area - Nicola Robinson and Trevor Bond. Our focus is upon catchment-scale working to deliver multiple benefits, bringing together partners within the Priority Catchment to tackle common problems. We're also keen to raise the profile of the waterbodies in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, many of which are inconspicuous to the general public.

We've now walked the length of the Tang, Hollesley and Butley rivers, and identified measures to improve them. We've investigated suspicious discharges,

The Coast Isn't Just for Summer ...

Fifteen years ago Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler published *'The Snail and the Whale'*. The classic tale of adventure and friendship tells the story of a tiny snail who hitches a lift around the world on the tail of "a great big, grey-blue humpback whale". Together they go on an amazing journey, past icebergs and volcanoes, sharks and penguins. The little snail feels so small in the vastness of the world but when disaster strikes and the whale is beached in a bay, it's the tiny snail's big plan that saves the day.

To celebrate this anniversary Natural England has worked with the Marine Management Organisation and Macmillan Children's Books to produce an activity booklet. It can be used on any visit to the coast – be it high summer or a blustery autumnal day that ends with a visit to a warm café.

The booklet can be downloaded from marinedevelopments.blog.gov.uk/2018/08/01/a-coastal-adventure-with-the-snail-and-the-whale

Jonathan Clarke, England Coast Path Delivery Team



Felixstowe Ferry, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

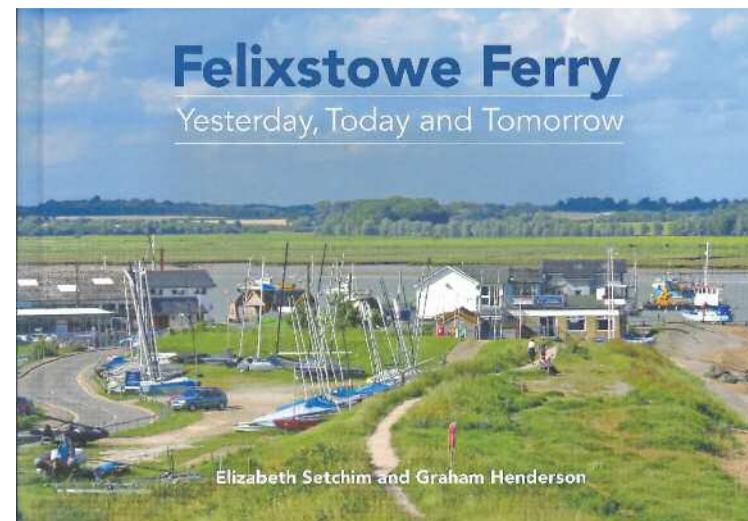
The small village on the mouth of the River Deben is a magnet for day-trippers, and many readers of this new book will themselves have happy memories of crabbing from the jetty, buying fish from the fish stall, crossing the river on the ferry, or eating and drinking in the pubs and cafes there. It is a popular place with sailors and golfers.

The book celebrates the ramshackle charm of Felixstowe Ferry, known locally as 'The Ferry', and peels back the layers of history behind many different aspects of life in this unusual and much-loved community. The book reveals an unusually long and rich documented history, using interviews with residents and the contents of their personal photo albums and scrap books to bring the history of the place to life.

Elizabeth Setchim moved to the Ferry 15 years ago and soon fell in love with the haunting beauty, crisp dawns and huge skies that are characteristic of the place. Liz did the writing and I curated around 100 photographs and images. I've lived in the Ferry since 1968 and amongst other things, am Chairman of Suffolk Coast Against Retreat (SCAR) and served as Commodore of Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club twice.

The book has been three years in the making and started out as an update to a previous publication from 1990 - *'The Hamlet of Felixstowe Ferry'* in the popular *'Pictures from the Past'* series. Liz says it has not been a hard book to write because of the willing participation of local people who shared their memories. The book costs £10 and is available from Stillwater Books and local locations at The Ferry.

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Going Underground

With thanks to UK Power Networks and landowners in the two AONBs an impressive 22 miles of overhead power lines and their poles have been removed in the last ten years. Through a process called ‘undergrounding’ 10 miles have been removed from Dedham Vale AONB and 12 miles from the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB protected landscape – and more is planned!

In 2005 Ofgem, the electricity regulator, began granting electricity network operators a special allowance to replace overhead lines with underground cables where possible, to enhance the appearance of protected landscapes in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks.

UK Power Networks, which operates the electricity networks in both AONBs, has been working in partnership with local landowners and the AONB team on 11 schemes: six schemes totalling £2.24m have been delivered in Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB whilst five schemes totalling £1.88m were delivered in Dedham Vale AONB. UK Power Networks is the country’s



biggest electricity distributor, keeping the lights on for more than eight million homes and businesses across London, the East and South East of England.

The AONB team is now working with AONB based landowners and UK Power Networks to deliver seven further potential schemes totalling over £3.2m, assuming full landowner support. See map for locations: red is complete and green is in progress.

with wider stakeholders such as the local authority, Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency. Assuming full landowner support has been achieved and no insurmountable constraints have been identified by stakeholders the AONB return to the regional steering group for further scrutiny and a decision. Once approved, the AONB pass the scheme to UK Power Networks to progress. This includes negotiating wayleaves with each landowner and obtaining all required consents. Once everything is in place UK Power Networks then provides the manpower and expertise to carry out the work.



How does Undergrounding Work?

Although proposals to underground overhead lines can originate from parish councils, community groups or private individuals all are scored and assessed by the AONB team. Highest scores are afforded where electricity lines impact on landscape character, landscape features and visual amenity and/or where undergrounding could benefit the setting of historic features and biodiversity. The feasibility of the proposal is then assessed by UK Power Networks and, if viable, the AONB present the scheme to a regional steering group chaired by Natural England to decide which proceed to the next stage.

Shaun Barrell from UK Power Networks, oversees the undergrounding projects. He said: *“Our power lines are needed to deliver electricity to homes and businesses, and they are often visible from public viewpoints and rights of way. Replacing the overhead lines with underground cables makes such an immediate and permanent improvement to these protected landscapes. It helps restore uncluttered open views that will be enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. We are pleased to be playing our role in enhancing the local landscape for future generations.”*

If approved the AONB then work with all affected local landowners to get in-principle support, as well as consulting

Simon Buckland, UK Power Networks and Claire Cadman, AONB Projects Officer

Claire Cadman AONB Projects Officer

I was very pleased and excited to join the AONB Team in July. I have always viewed the AONB as people delivering great projects in genuine partnerships – and I really want to be part of that. First impressions haven’t disappointed. People are friendly and welcoming, our partners are positive and our landscapes are... outstanding!



A few highlights so far have been: working alongside the Stour Valley Volunteers; walking along the historic Sailors Path through flowering heathland; and, attending a national gathering of AONB representatives to share our experiences and look to the future.

In the immediate future I am picking up the delivery on a few existing projects, such as working with local landowners and UK Power Networks to improve our visual landscape by undergrounding electricity cables in both Dedham Vale AONB and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. After visiting several sites I’m eager to get things moving and make a difference.

Over the longer term I’m looking forward to getting more familiar with the two AONBs – learning about the places and their people. By listening to those who live in, work in or care for these areas I hope to make connections with the aims and ambitions of the AONB - looking to see how we can work together with partners on some super projects that really deliver.

Beverley McClean AONB Planning Officer

I was delighted when I was offered the AONB Planning Officer job as I felt that the new role would enable me to make use of not only my planning skills but also the other experience I had built over the years. After joining Colchester Borough Council’s Local Plan team in 2006, I qualified as a Chartered Planner in 2008 after completing an MSc in Town & Country Planning. Prior to retraining, I had worked on an EU Coastal Management Project and before that I worked in Countryside Management at Essex County Council for 14 years.



These first few months have been pretty busy but it has been a great privilege to meet the various project and partnership members all helping to conserve and enhance the AONBs.

I was and still am a little surprised about the sheer level of and diversity of development pressures within the AONBs, from National Infrastructure Projects to single dwellings in the countryside.

As well as responding to planning applications I provide comments on emerging Local Plans and Waste and Mineral Plans. For example, with Waveney District Council we are preparing a Statement of Common Ground covering AONB related issues which will be presented to the Planning Inspector during the Waveney Local Plan Examination in October 2018.

It isn’t all just about responding to planning applications though. At the time of writing I am finalising arrangements for an exciting AONB Planning Event on Friday 25 January and starting on a briefing paper on the Stour Valley as a Valued Landscape to help support decision making related to planning applications in the Project area.

Climate is What You Expect, Weather is What You Get

The difference between weather and climate is generally agreed to be a measure of time. Weather is what atmospheric conditions are over a short period of time, and climate is how the atmosphere behaves over relatively longer periods of time. If seasons consistently seem hotter, colder, wetter, drier, windier, then the recent climate may have changed.

The AONB Management Plan recognises the evidence suggesting there are changes to global climate. The Plan seeks to highlight the potential impact of climate change on the area and how negative impacts can be reduced or mitigated against.

Among the changes due to climate change listed in Natural England's National Character Area Profile for Dedham Vale (No 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland) and (No 82) for the Suffolk Coast are:

- Changes to rainfall patterns and timings, higher temperatures and prolonged periods of drought, will impact on wetland features and habitats such as grazing marsh, fen type habitats and ponds, and impacting species diversity.
- River valleys prevented from naturally evolving may have increased flood risks if climate change increases rainfall and subsequent flow volumes in rivers.
- Historic woodlands and native species may not be the most resilient and therefore unable to survive reduced soil moisture

- or extreme events.
- Coastal change will see further erosion and reshaping of sections of this coast will inevitably occur over time.

Every year during the last ten has been hotter (or almost hotter) than the previous one. Plants, animals etc. in the AONBs have evolved in a temperate climate and generally are adapted to a higher level of rainfall and cooler temperatures throughout the summer than we experienced this year. Drought can be extremely challenging. Organisms race ahead in development if the water supply holds out.

Although difficult to predict, as ecological interactions are complex, the dry spell is likely to leave wildlife winners and losers. Barrow, near Bury St Edmunds was touted as the driest place in UK this summer. It did not rain for 50 days. For insects, the general view is that the hot weather has been a boon. However, there is evidence that some insect populations have still not recovered from the drought of 1976, so the higher numbers of some insects we have seen on the wing this summer, may be misleading. Nevertheless, it has been a treat to see lots of dragonflies and damselflies on the wing!

Our grasslands were brown and 'sere' by the time the rains came in August. It has been interesting to note that only certain plants 'regenerated' and some seem to have put in an incredible spurt to flower and seed before it gets too cold.



Migrant Hawker Dragonfly

Among these 'regenerators', the ferny leaves and pink and white flower heads of Yarrow have been prominent.

We advise you to do what you can personally to limit your personal impact on climate change whilst enjoying the natural sights and sounds of the AONBs.

Neil Lister, AONB Countryside Project Officer

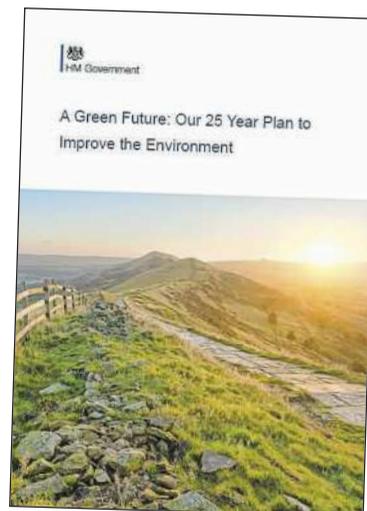
The State of the AONBs

In a speech in 1966, Robert F Kennedy said: There is a Chinese curse which says, 'May he live in interesting times.' It is certainly interesting times for the nationally designated AONBs. There is an unprecedented national review of designated landscapes, revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and the launch of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. That is before you might consider what the impacts of Brexit may be on the land management of AONBs.

At a local level we are seeing previously unseen levels of development pressures on the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs. This includes proposals relating to the 'Suffolk Energy Coast' that includes a new nuclear power station, massive offshore wind energy production with associated on shore and off shore infrastructure and proposals for at least two interconnectors to connect Great Britain with continental Europe. If delivered the proposals for Suffolk's Energy Coast will lead to a requirement to strengthen National Grid's infrastructure across the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley.

With these proposals hovering over the nationally designated AONBs, the importance of the AONB management plans have never been so great. This statutory document, along with national policies contained within the revised National Planning Policy Framework and the soon to be revised

National Policy Statements and local policy should influence development decisions to ensure the purposes of the nationally designated AONBs are not overlooked.



With many of the issues above in mind, the AONBs have commissioned reports into the State of the AONBs. This report will give baseline environmental information on the AONBs that will help improve understanding of them. It will also be a useful indicator of what significant decisions that will be made over the coming months and years have on the state of the AONBs.

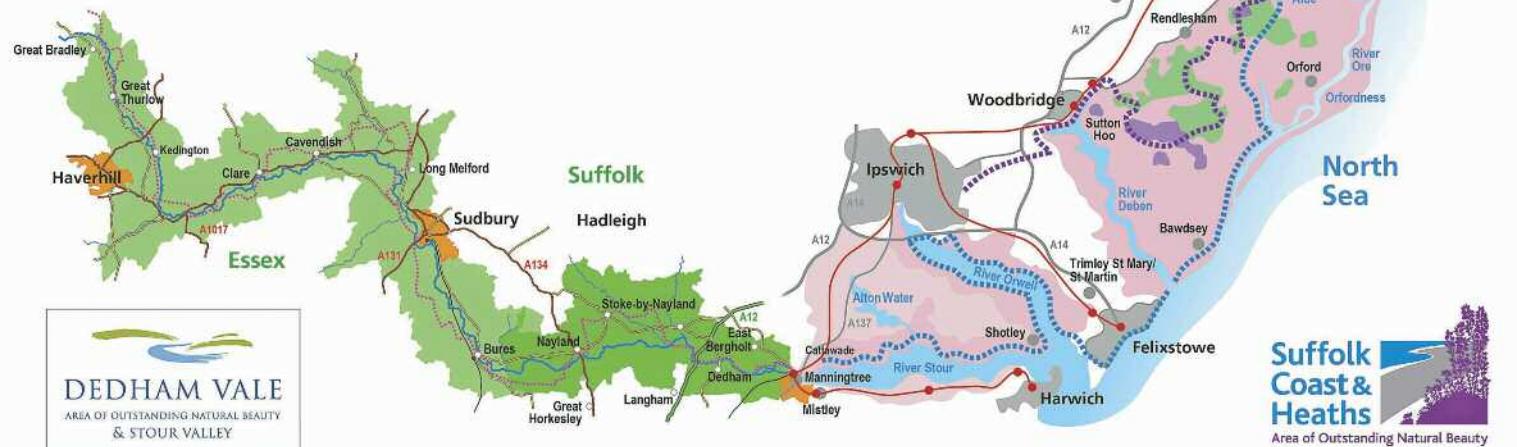
The AONBs themselves have never been so important in terms of their economic and health contributions. The volume and value of tourism are up in both AONBs, creating more jobs and promotion of healthy lifestyles. However, the AONB team and its associated Partnerships are acutely aware of the need to retain the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB and not look to promote mass tourism. We continue to promote low impact tourism and visits outside the peak season.

We live in interesting times and I urge you all to support the aims of the AONB in whatever way you can.

Simon Amstutz, AONB Manager



Nigel Chapman (Chair Dedham Vale AONB JAC), David Wood (Chair Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership), Simon Amstutz (AONB staff team manager) at Cattawade, where the two AONBs meet



Farming and Landscape at a Policy Crossroads



Of all parts of our society it's unlikely that there is any other sector as dramatically affected by Brexit as farming. Policy has been made at an EU level in Brussels for the last forty years, and in the last twenty years this has expanded from just covering production agriculture to policies marrying the needs of food production and the environment.

The environment covers many things including water, air and soil quality and biodiversity; but also, most importantly for our AONBs, landscape. The landscape that we love and cherish - and for which the Dedham Vale and the Suffolk Coasts & Heaths gained their AONB designation - has largely been shaped by centuries of agricultural practices.

Coming on top of Brexit the government has now announced that it wishes to review and take stock of the current farmed and designation landscapes.

Here in East Anglia, the National Farmers Union (NFU) has been focused for some time on certain specific inadequacies in current policies. This is particularly true for the support available to lowland grazing - a key feature of the Dedham Vale and the river valleys of the coast and heaths. For years farmers were encouraged to protect this vital component of landscape-maintaining practices by the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) scheme. This scheme started as pilot in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and expanded nationwide.

However, in the last two sets of updated agri-environment schemes - first ELS and HLS and now mid-tier and higher-tier - the focus and appropriate options available for extensive lowland grazing have all but disappeared. With no scheme to turn to, farmers are on a cliff edge of potentially intensifying their livestock production or reverting grassland back to arable to maintain viable businesses. This could have major consequences for our AONB landscapes.



Rob Wise (third from right) and speakers at the Dedham Vale Forum June 2018

We have been working with the Broads Authority and other interested environmental NGOs to develop a new fit for the future version of the old ESA scheme. This has been offered to Defra to pick up as one of their 'tests, trials and pilots' to design a new agri-environment scheme for when we leave the EU. If picked up by Defra, we'd hope to be able to roll it out into the AONB areas as well.

On the wider stage the NFU continues to stress to government the need to design policies that support both viable farm business, and maintenance and enhancement of the environment. What has been uplifting in the debates of the recent past is the amount of common cause there is between the farming and environmental communities. While we bemoan the lack of an appropriate current national scheme, we mustn't forget the contribution the AONBs make themselves. Through their own Sustainable Development Funds, Stour Valley Environment Fund and other conservation funds, the AONBs have been playing an important part in helping fund smaller scale projects that directly affect landscape quality.

Rob Wise, National Farmers Union (NFU)

New Use of Colour Guides for the AONBs

The AONB team recently commissioned Jem Waygood, of Waygood Colour, to complete a Use of Colour study for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

The study was commissioned to provide guidance for developers, landowners, planners and architects about the sympathetic use of colour in new developments within the AONBs. The document will help those who value and care about the AONBs, to ensure that potential negative impacts of development on the character of the AONBs are minimised and a sense the place enhanced.



Sample colour chart in the Use Of Colour Guides

The colour palettes of soils, water bodies, and vegetation typical of each of the landscape character types across both AONBs were recorded, analysed and mapped. This work was carried out in winter to capture the truest array of colours found within each landscape character area. Information about 'existing palettes' - the dominant colours, tones, and colour associations - found in the two AONBs and the range of colours against which new development is viewed, were assessed. Using the existing palettes, a developed colour palette was prepared, which demonstrates the range of related colours that can be used harmoniously with the existing recorded colour palettes within the AONBs.

The Use of Colour Guides for the AONBs, as well as being very beautiful documents to look at, include useful and practical information on the use of colour in new developments, and aim to conserve and enhance the character of the AONBs.

The Use of Colour Guides will be formally launched at a Planning Event being organised by the AONB team on Friday 25 January 2019.

Beverley McClean, AONB Planning Officer

Barn Owls Suffer at the Hands of "The Beast"

Suffolk is bracing itself as this year's breeding season is likely to be the worst for Barn Owls since the founding of the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project in 2005. In the past six years, an average of 450 of our specially-designed boxes has played host to nesting Barn Owls, a ten-fold increase on the 45 occupied nests that was recorded in the late-1980s. Another bumper year was witnessed in 2017 with 379 broods being reared from 469 occupied nests. However, Barn Owls rely heavily on good short-tailed vole populations, which peak and trough on a three to four-year cycle and, by the end of the year, there was a decline in vole numbers, resulting in high mortality amongst late broods.



© Gavin Dummett

The vole population could well have recovered quickly if last winter had remained mild, but this was not the case as Britain was hit firstly by "The Beast from the East" and then "The Mini-beast". Female Barn Owls need to attain a weight of 340-360g to be in a condition to breed, and she makes a judgement on the amount of food brought to her nesting chamber by the male. With a shortage of voles, food was hard to find, so most pairs appear to have skipped a breeding year. Most adults are present in the boxes, but sadly few have produced broods.

Steve Piotrowski

ActivLives CommuniBees

After finishing my volunteer placement with the AONB and joining the ActivGardens Team in April 2017 little did I know that I would become a beekeeper. Sixteen months ago I vividly remember visiting our bees for the first time, donning the bee suit and armed with the smoker, feeling the bees knees (!). Once the lid was lifted and the bees took flight, I couldn't believe the hum of the bees flying past my visor. I gradually became familiar with what to record and look out for, and to understand bee jargon. I also remember the multiple stings I received whilst delivering a session at our Big Garden Party.

My highlights are holding a frame covered in bees for the first time, spotting the elusive queen bee, harvesting and sampling the glorious honey (a pooh bear moment), creating a shallow pond for the bees, observing people's reactions whilst offloading facts about our honey bees, seeing first-hand how our bees have built confidence in so many of our visitors, and being successful in placing a queen cell into a nuclei. The joys are endless.

Our yield of honey rose from forty-eight jars last summer to one hundred and five jars this season. As our five hives quieten down for the winter, we are creating a wild flower meadow bordered by a hedge adjacent to our apiary, and repairing our fire damaged



site. A huge thank you goes to my mentor Betsy Reid (Ipswich & East Suffolk Bee Keepers Association), whose calm nature, knowledge and delivery style has given me the confidence to really enjoy our bees.

ActivLives have had schools, colleges, pupil referral units, prison services, community groups, corporate groups, individuals from the community as well as regular volunteers, visit our apiary. We have some great ideas to further develop our apiary as a real 'CommuniBee' education and wellbeing resource. I feel very privileged to be able to share the ActivLives apiary with all walks of life from our local community and witness the benefits that it brings: activlives.org.uk.

Danny Thorrington, ActivLives

Working Hard to Tackle Rural Crime in Suffolk



Suffolk Constabulary has a small but dedicated team determined to help rural communities tackle wildlife and rural crimes. Rural crime is defined as any crime of an agricultural, livestock, wildlife or heritage nature.

The team has an Inspector, a Sergeant, two Police Constables and three Special Constables. In addition there are seven police officers on the force who have also been trained to tackle wildlife crime. We use 4x4 vehicles, which are marked up in rural crime livery, as well as a small all-terrain vehicle (ATV). If needed we have access to drones (small unmanned surveillance aircrafts) to help with intelligence gathering and operational policing.

The team's current priorities include rural thefts (machinery / plant / diesel and technology such as GPS equipment), hare coursing, poaching, raptor persecution, damage to habitat, policing of hunts and heritage crime, including theft of lead from churches. We also deal with badger baiting, stag hunting with dogs and other unlawful activities which can cause damage to fields, property and vehicles. The team are also trained in CITES (Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species) offences, such as illegal ivory, Rhino horn etc, as well as live specimens of illegal animals. We find there is a clear link between the aforementioned crimes and serious organised crime groups who are involved with other criminal activity such as drugs, trafficking and slavery.

Tackling theft of oil, diesel, metals, fertiliser, plant and equipment from agricultural land and buildings and keeping a watchful eye on isolated farm properties with older residents. Offering crime prevention advice where we can is also a significant element of our work. In addition we work with a multiagency task force to try to clamp down on fly-tipping, theft of agricultural equipment and plant.

Given the large area of land the team cover it is essential that they receive good intelligence from the local community. Please help us.



When to report: If you have been a victim of rural crime, or if you see rural or wildlife crime taking place.

What to report:

- Date, Time, Location
- Are the suspect/s alone or in a group?
- Are they trespassing?
- Do they have equipment with them?
- Do they have dogs or firearms with them?
- Where are they going?
- Where have they been?
- What do they look like?
- Have they any vehicles?
- What are the number plates and vehicle models?
- Can you safely get a photograph?

Who to report to: If it is not happening at the time of reporting and is not urgent call 101 or via www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us/report-something/report-crime. If it is happening at the time of reporting or is urgent call 999.

Kevin Stollery, Suffolk Rural & Wildlife Crime Unit

AONBs Planning Event 2019

The aim of the Planning Event is to re-emphasise and highlight the legal responsibilities organisations have who work within the AONBs, to remind people about why about the AONBs have been designated and to promote new guidance that the AONB team has commissioned.

The half day event, at the University of Suffolk will take place on Friday 25 January 2019, and will look at various themes across both AONBs:

- Duty of Regard
- Natural Beauty & Special Qualities
- Tranquillity
- Use of Colour in new developments (see article p9)

The event is aimed at planners, elected Members, Parish Council's and organisations with responsibilities within the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. It will be Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) accredited so those attending can count it as Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Event details are on the AONB website or contact the office.

Getting Active in Suffolk's AONBs

Suffolk has witnessed a huge growth over the past few years in the number of free to attend weekly running events taking place across the county, consistently attracting more than 3,000 participants every week. Supported by Suffolk's Most Active County, Parkrun and Great Run Local, events have been established by local communities and volunteers who come together each week to give participants the opportunity to walk, jog and run through and along some of Suffolk's finest parks, countryside and coasts.



Inaugural Parkrun on Sizewell Beach

The AONBs currently play host to six such events with the most recent one being launched in August at Sizewell near Leiston in partnership with RSPB Minsmere. Other events include: Haverhill, Clare, Great Cornard, Holbrook and Southwold. Details of all the runs can be found at www.parkrun.co.uk and www.greatrunlocal.org.

As well as providing a fantastic opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to come together to do some regular weekly exercise, the events provide a reason for communities to meet and socialise providing far reaching benefits. If your community is interested in establishing a run please contact me: colin.grogan@suffolk.gov.uk or 07515 188309.

Colin Grogan, Suffolk County Council

Making Suffolk Happier, Fitter and Richer



Walkers came from as far afield as North Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cornwall to this year's Suffolk Walking Festival (May-June 2018), making it the most successful event in its 11-year history. Over 2,000 people attended 125 walks and events that spanned the whole county with everything from a Dawn Chorus Walk to a Twilight Safari. And those who came spent as well. The Festival pulled in a whopping £176,000 to the local economy, benefitting shops, restaurants, cafes, and accommodation.

It's great that the Festival has grown and grown over the last decade and is not only well established here in Suffolk but is now well known beyond our county. The festival is well loved by all who take part and it seems to have inspired them too. People loved discovering and learning about new places or places they thought they

knew. "We discovered parts of Lavenham we never knew existed" said a walker on the Lavenham Blue walk, which explored the town's medieval heritage. "The most relaxed and friendly walk I've been on to date!", one walker commented.



Challenge Walkers 2018 at Orangerie Holywells Park with Lady Mayor

Plans are now in hand for the 2019 Suffolk Walking Festival. New for 2019 will be a link up with the Orwell Challenge, more Fringe Festival events, and more family events throughout half-term. Next year's Suffolk Walking Festival and Fringe will be mid-May to early June. www.suffolkwalkingfestival.co.uk.

David Falk, Suffolk County Council



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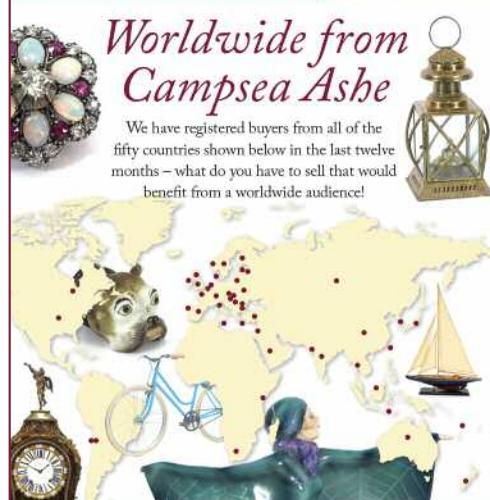
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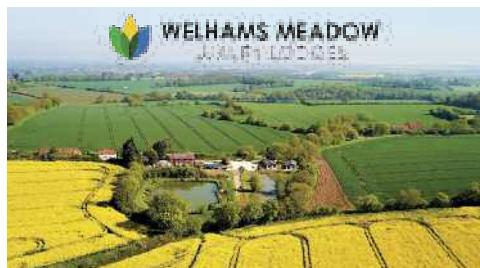


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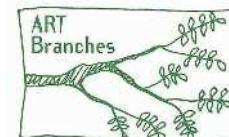
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Coastal Plant Studies

Art Branches CIC ran Sizewell Coastal Plant Studies along Minsmere and Sizewell beach in June to August with kind thanks to Galloper Wind Farm Fund. Young children aged 5-9 and 9-13 were invited to the project as a day respite away from what can be a demanding role as a child carer, caring for an adult at home. For many it was the first coastal outing of the summer and Art Branches included a refreshing walk and environmental education in the day.



Plants were identified and recorded alongside a professional artist and all children went home with a field notebook to continue their observations over summer. Art Branches supplied a variety of materials to record observations in different media and to encourage children to think and record creatively. Plastic waste was collected from the beach by all children and the fragility of the oceans and shingle beach were discussed alongside the plant studies.

By far the favourite plant was the sea kale and all on the workshops magnified the plants 60x to look for details. "The cabbage plants are like little swimming pools; the leaves catch and hold water which can feed the insects", observed age 9 participant.

Stephanie Hartick

Shingle Street Survey

We've been doing surveys of the vegetation on the shingle here for several years now to record the changes to the fragile plant communities that are adapted to this harsh and shifting environment. With the help of an AONB Sustainable Development Fund grant we did another survey in summer 2018 and noted several changes.

The sea kale has been very abundant and was a magnificent spectacle, stretching all the way from Shingle Street to East Lane, Bawdsey, like a forest of huge cauliflowers sprouting unexpectedly from a desert of stones. The sea pea has spread too and there are huge drifts of it in new areas across the shingle. The clusters of its purple flowers fade to blue later and are then succeeded by succulent seed pods, which are said to have once staved off starvation on the Suffolk coast in the seventeenth century during a famine. Scattered amongst these are individual representatives of other shingle specialists like orache, sea beet, curly dock and the beautiful yellow-horned poppies (whose parts contain toxic hallucinogens, however).

The most striking change, however, is in the expansion of the grasses that now cover much of the central band of shingle and so helps to stabilise it. This comes with the further benefit that we now have skylarks singing over the shingle for the first time, exploiting the new grassland habitat that has emerged.

Jeremy Mynott



Shingle Street showing improved vegetation

© Jeremy Mynott

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The Long and the Short of Sheds

Do you have a short shed in your garden? In Woodbridge we have a long one. Your shed is probably just right for one person's dream projects ... yours. Our community Longshed has to encompass the dreams of the people of our town whoever they may be, the long, the short and the tall.

Our shed is for boats. What size would you like? We have short ones such as the 12ft Cajun Canoe to be built by members of the local youth group *Just42*. Woodworking

beginners will tackle this simple craft and then use it on the river. The Longshed has the woodworking facilities to safely introduce these young people to the challenge of making their own craft and going afloat in it.

Maybe you'd prefer something a bit bigger? Medium? There is a St Ayles Skiff already under construction. These are 22ft long with seating for four rowers and a steers-person and are built from standard pre-cut parts. Whilst youngsters do row them they are also ideal for people of a more elderly persuasion who prefer a little comfort with their exercise.

Our Longshed also does very large. Beginner, Improver or Expert? In Woodbridge we also do Expert. Our shed is long enough to hold our Longship at 90ft. This is a full-size reconstruction of England's first warship that we are about to begin. Based on the Anglo-Saxon, Sutton Hoo burial ship, five years of research is about to culminate in the most exciting dream project ever to come out of any shed, whatever its length. Our dreams, our Sheds...
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Andrea Leech, Woodbridge Whisstocks Project – Sustainable Development Fund Grant



Aldeburgh's Amazing Swifts

The spring and summer weather certainly set some challenges for our wildlife during 2018. The late spring delayed the arrival of many of our summer visitors, not least of all our Swifts for whom the hot summer was thought to have forced some of their young to leave the nest early before they were fully able to fly.

Aldeburgh's Swifts joined the 'convoy' of migrating Swifts during the early evening of 25th July when several hundred were spotted heading south at the start of their 7,500 mile journey to Central Africa. For this year's newborn, this marathon, undertaken without landing, could be the first of three migrations to Africa and back before they start a family of their own.

But when our Swifts return next May, they will discover that over eighty new nest boxes have been installed around Aldeburgh and Snape. With thanks to the Suffolk Secrets AONB Fund, nest boxes and a camera system have also been installed in the Parish Church belfry, so it is hoped that live footage of nesting Swifts will be available in the years to come. In summer 2018 the Jackdaws, who live on the other side of the tower, were the stars of the show! Nature boards have been installed along the seafront to help visitors identify some of our amazing aerial acrobats and to show how the town's residents and businesses have supported our conservation project.

Swifts naturally nest under roof tiles, so if you are renewing your roof this winter, do seek some advice on how to preserve existing nests or provide new holes for these endangered birds. www.aldeburghsamazingswifts.co.uk

Alan Collett



© Bill Baston

Swift Community Action

Now that the summer is over and our breeding Swifts have left us to spend the next nine months in sub-Saharan Africa, we can marvel that 2018 has turned out to be such a good year for Swifts. Even though the season started rather late, from mid June onwards the number of Swifts increased and people across Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB enjoyed the annual spectacle of these aerobic birds wheeling and screaming across the skies and around our roofs. Many of these screaming parties included juveniles prospecting for nest sites.



It was especially pleasing that this year, many of our new nest boxes, particularly those with sound systems, have been investigated and we have had reports of Swifts screaming around the nest boxes and received several photographs of Swifts peering out of a nest box. We are optimistic that these Swifts will return next May to take up their chosen residence.

Swifts are in serious decline. Their numbers have halved over the last 20 years. This is mainly due to loss of nest sites through home, and particularly roof, improvements.

The good news now is that local communities, where there are nesting Swifts, are starting Local Community Swift Groups. It gives the opportunity for friends and interest groups to use their local knowledge to spread information through the whole community to ensure the survival of their Swifts. There are now established Swift groups in Woodbridge, Aldeburgh, Saxmundham, Shottisham and Stutton, with Orford and Wickham Market on the way, and with Waldringfield Natural History Society doing their bit! We hope that local enthusiasts might form more groups – it would be good to see groups form in Framlingham, Hollesley, Alderton, Bawdsey and Grundisburgh. We can build on the existing population by preserving and creating nesting places for Swifts.

To support local groups and individuals, SOS Swifts – a partnership project run by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Suffolk Ornithologists' Group – will offer one or more 'Swift Adviser' training mornings, on Saturdays between autumn 2018 and spring 2019. The (free!) training is for anyone who would like to know more about the amazing lives of Swifts, the reasons for the decline in their numbers and most importantly how we can all help them. We also hope to arrange a specialist afternoon event on how to rehabilitate grounded and injured Swifts of all ages. This will be for people who are able to make a firm commitment to giving a lot of time to care for Swifts between June and September and be on call if the need arises. Contact Tracey (see left) if you would like to attend either of these events.

If we could slow or halt the decline in numbers, we will have made just a small contribution to the conservation of wildlife for the next generation.

Jenny James and Edward Jackson

Woodbridge Swifts

The RSPB Woodbridge Local Group project has been working since 2015 to halt the decline in Swift numbers in this part of Suffolk. We have recorded Swift nests, encouraged nest box installation and alerted builders and householders to the need to conserve Swift nest sites when doing roof repairs. There have been swift walks, talks from SOS Swifts expert Edward Jackson, links to schools and nest boxes on Parish Churches.

boxes on the Tide Mill, the Cruising Club, the new Council Offices, the wall of the swimming pool on the



Just visiting - a Swift investigating a newly installed nest box

© Paul Hetherington

refurbished Deben Leisure Centre, the Whisstocks development and there are plans for integrated boxes in the Riverside Theatre development.

After four years of recording in east Suffolk, we know of around 100 Swift nests in eaves, under roof tiles and in nest boxes. We have also sold over 100 nest boxes and this year Swifts have been flying around, visiting, entering or nesting in a number of these.

Jenny James

In Woodbridge we now have nest

Stutton Swifts

In Stutton, the fortunes of Swifts are in the balance. They only nest in four houses in one road - an extremely precarious existence. To boost their fortunes, six families agreed to have external Swift boxes installed. Thanks to a generous grant from the AONB, "Stimpson" Swift-boxes were purchased from John Stimpson and with the help of Paul Keys (the nicest roofer in Suffolk) these have now been installed.

To increase their chances of occupancy, recorded calls will be played in the boxes when the birds return in the spring of 2019. In time, if all the boxes are occupied, that will double the population in the village and Stutton Close may be able to lay claim to being the most Swift-friendly street in the county...!

Mark, Stutton resident



Existing Community Swift groups:

Woodbridge - Jenny James woodbridge.swifts@gmail.com and Eddie Bathgate zzyzyx@icloud.com

Shottisham - Helen Kemp helbru@gotadsl.co.uk

Aldeburgh - Alan Collett alan.collett6@btinternet.com

Wickham Market - Chris Wilsher cozziesbykris@aol.com

Saxmundham - Sam Hanks sam.hanks@suffolkwildlifetrust.org

Orford - Mark Linsley marklinsley60@gmail.com

Waldringfield - Linda Wilkins linda.thequay@btinternet.com

For general advice on Swifts of Suffolk: www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/swifts

To express your interest in Swifts training events: Tracey Housley tracey.housley@suffolkwildlifetrust.org

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GreenSnape Mini-Meadows & Magic Sponges!

Thanks to generous support from the Suffolk Secrets AONB Fund, GreenSnape volunteers have renovated Snape village green providing new oak benches and seating, a handsome new bin and new step up to the postbox. It's such a pleasure to see the seating being well used by both villagers and visitors.



Snape Primary School wildflower planting day

Continuing our aim to promote children's interest in wildlife and nature, we once again joined forces with Snape Primary School to plant hundreds of ox-eye daisies and cowslip plugs on the village green and outside the Crown pub. The children enjoyed learning about the importance of biodiversity and pollination by bees

and other insects and are looking forward to seeing the 'mini-meadows' next spring.

GreenSnape goes from strength to strength and we now have 70

members. Our autumn task will see us armed with magic sponges and soapy water to clean roadside signs throughout the village, fulfilling another of our intentions to give Snape a bit of a facelift. We work to protect and improve our local environment for residents, visitors and wildlife.

Thank you to all our members for their help and support in all our activities and to Snape Parish Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council for their generous grants – together we're making Snape maintain its stronghold of the natural world.

Lesley Walduck



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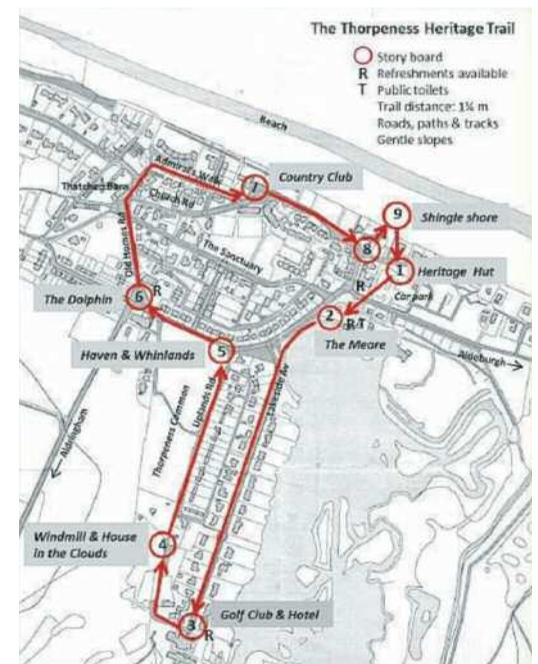
Thorpeness and Aldringham Village Trail

When the Thorpeness and Aldringham Heritage Group was formed in 2015 one of its first objectives was to raise money for a walking trail around Thorpeness village. It was decided that a series of interpretative boards would inform the visitor of what they were looking at and village history. These boards are both 'stand alone' and form part of a walking trail. The project was a mammoth task for such a small newly formed group, and much fundraising ensued (including the Galloper Wind Farm Fund). When we had enough money the first four boards were commissioned, and a further four boards came to fruition about a year later.

Bringing the information together for each board was done mainly by committee member Hilary Chandler. Hilary's late father, George Cook, had worked in the Ogilvie estate and had amassed a vast collection of photographs of Thorpeness that spanned much of the last century. We used a local printer and a local carpenter to make the wooden lecterns for the boards. Volunteers set out with spades in hand and where necessary with the landowners permission to erect each board around the village.

The trail, starting at the car park and gently meandering through the village, takes the visitor on a journey past the points of interest. The feedback is so good that we will soon be instigating a similar trail through Aldringham.

Sue Atkinson







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Increasing Awareness of the River



Primary School group showing off the new small buoyancy aids

We recently had some very large groups of youngsters at Neptune, so we were very lucky to receive an AONB Community & Conservation Fund grant for ten additional small buoyancy aids. These have helped us to increase the size of the groups we have, especially with Primary Schools and the scouts, enabling youngsters to become aware of the natural beauty of the river and surrounding area, during taster sailing sessions.

At Neptune Sailing our largest training course is a five-day RYA Dinghy Instructor Course. A critical part of the course involves the candidates demonstrating their skills by instructing beginners, giving a presentation and writing papers. We were very pleased that Chelmondston primary school agreed to us using 24 of their pupils as the beginners for the new instructors to practice with.

Mick Leverett

Butley Community Playground

Following years of piecemeal repairs on the 30+ year old playground at Butley Village Hall, the decision was made to rip it down and start afresh. As Butley is such a small village, the cost of 'off the shelf' play equipment meant a ready-made playground was out of the question, so we decided to build a replacement ourselves as a community project.



Subsequently, a new adventure playground was designed – one which would appeal to the more adventurous and demanding children of today and which would be constructed of natural materials to harmonise with the countryside within our AONB. Funding was obtained from local, district and county councillors together with a very generous grant from the Awards for All Fund and a grant from the Amenity & Accessibility Fund.

The old playground was demolished in early June but it soon became obvious that the project could take months if we were to rely on community work days. Fortunately, HM Prison and Probation Service came to the rescue and the Governors of Hollesley Bay provided three chaps, who, utilising their building experience, worked solidly for five weeks to help make our design a reality. The community did a few work days and the neighbours all participated by helping to keep the workers fed and watered for the duration of the project.

The new playground was officially opened at the Butley Flower Show on 22 July and we hope that it gives pleasure to everyone who visits it for several years to come.

Caroline Read

New Hide for Hen

A new hide to enable visitors to watch wildlife while enjoying panoramic views of the Blyth estuary has been built at Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Hen Reedbeds reserve.

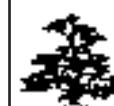
The hide, funded by Suffolk Coasts & Heaths AONB Sustainable Development Fund and proceeds from the sale of Adnams carrier bags, was completed this summer. The octagonal structure, which was erected by volunteers, stands on legs allowing birdwatchers to see across the reedbed and scrapes and over the top of the river wall.

In autumn and winter the reedbeds can be quiet as most of the breeding birds will have migrated but that's the time when the estuary is full of ducks and waders feeding on the mud flats. Visitors can now sit in comfort watching the action instead of braving the elements. During spring the hide will be a must-visit location to see bitterns, marsh harrier and bearded tits in the reed, while there is always the chance of an otter swimming past.

Matt Gaw



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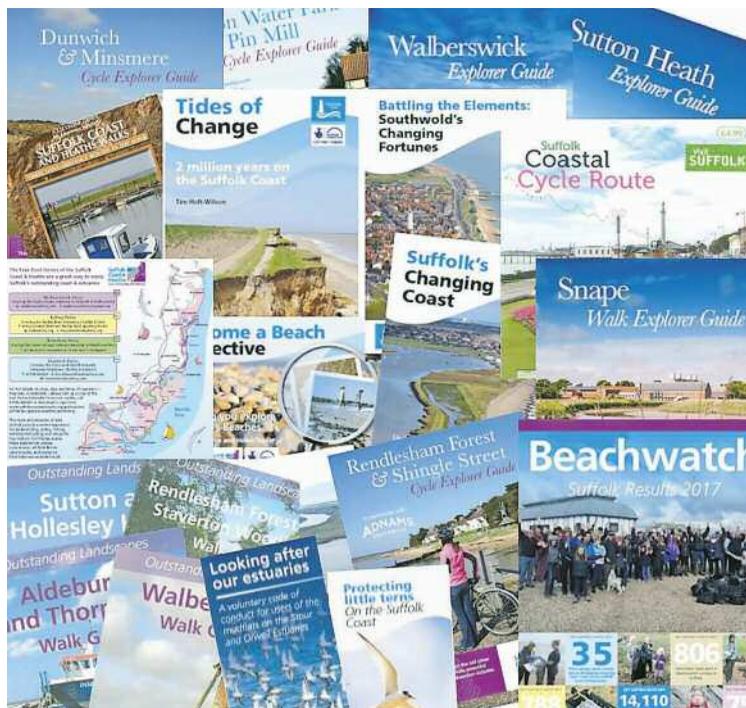
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Exploring the Suffolk Coast & Heaths

A 'family' of guides are produced by the AONB team to encourage people to explore the Suffolk coast, estuaries, forests and heaths! The area is fantastic at all times of year, and experiencing the changing seasons and discovering the different outstanding landscapes and villages are more than enough reason to return again and again... There are many Walk Explorer guides free to download from the AONB website, from Kessingland down to Wrabness. Or buy the Cicerone guide to the Suffolk Coast Path, the Stour and Orwell Walk and the Sandlings Walk for £12.95 from the AONB, for a longer challenge.

Aimed at increasing our understanding of the Suffolk Heritage Coast, including its natural processes and archaeology, the Touching the Tide Guides are available free to download or with P&P paid.

If cycling is your preferred outdoor experience, then we also have five Cycling Explorer Guides, also free to download. They range in distance from about 7 to 24 miles, with some short cuts for a more leisurely ride, or to take you on a longer ride of discovery there is the Suffolk Coast Cycle Route (£2.50 plus P&P).

Free the Trees!



Tree damage from plastic spiral

Tree guards, plastic tubes, and mulch mats can be invaluable in helping to get plants established, but once they've done their job all too often they end up as plastic litter, often splitting off as unsightly fragments. The AONBs believe it is time to remove and collect redundant tree and shrub shelters, guards and mulch mats from our landscape, returning it to its best.

Do you own a piece of land with old tree guards which need removing?

Are you involved with community-owned land that could benefit from the clearing of these plastics?

We would love to hear from you to discuss if your land is suitable for this or other conservation projects.



Key to Map

- AONB area
- Additional project area
- Towns and villages
- Woodland
- Heathland
- Main roads
- Railways/stations
- Suffolk Coast Path/Stour and Orwell Walk
- Sandlings Walk
- Sailors' Path



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