

UEA CIVIC FORUM
JULY 8TH, 2024

Unlocking Norfolk's Potential

What does
Norfolk need
to thrive?

WITH THANKS TO ALL OF THOSE WHO ATTENDED...

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EVENT REPORT

Unlocking Norfolk's Potential

JULY 8TH, 2024

EVENT REPORT

Unlocking
Norfolk's Potential
Regional Infrastructure,
an Executive Sandpit

July 8th 2024

REPORT PUBLISHED OCTOBER, 2024

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PREFACE

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Norfolk County Council was delighted to support the University of East Anglia (UEA) in bringing together dozens of key stakeholders to consider the steps we need to take to unlock the county's economic potential.

We applaud UEA's proactive and positive partnership with local government and regional businesses through its Civic Charter.

We were pleased UEA was able to bring so many people together in support of a common goal – greater prosperity for our county and its residents.

Norfolk boasts a unique and distinctive identity, strengthened by its people's passion and pride of place.

We have a diverse and outward looking economy, with historic and cultural assets, rural landscapes, coastal communities, three urban centres, and, of course, our market towns.

The county council is ambitious for Norfolk and its residents and growing our economy in a sustainable way is a key priority for the authority.

We are developing our economic strategy for Norfolk – our blueprint for growth – which will set out clearly our ambitions and how we will capitalise on our strengths and opportunities to realise Norfolk's economic potential. It will be a tool to unlock investment from the Government and the private sector.

This is a strategy for the county, and like UEA's Civic Charter, requires a partnership between the public, private, voluntary and education sectors.

Hundreds of organisations have a part to play in realising this ambition and it is critical that they play their part in developing the strategy.

Over the past six months we have hosted around 20 workshops in person and online, enabling more than 400 people and organisations to input into the plan.

We have also developed a comprehensive evidence base to understand in statistical terms the strengths and weaknesses of our economy.

The UEA event and this report is a key element in developing the economic approach. The rich discussions and thoughtful recommendations are being fed into the strategy.

The Norfolk Economic Strategy is just a start. We are building a vision for the long-term future of the county, an ambition that cannot be achieved by any one organisation, and one that needs us to work closely together to deliver impact for our county, making the most of our collective strengths and powers.

Chris Starkie

Director of Growth and Investment
Norfolk County Council





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INTRODUCTION

Westminster needs to invest in Norfolk because of its strategic contributions to national food security, energy, and defence. For this reason, if this politically contested county struggles, the nation will continue to struggle. This report is the outcome of an executive forum hosted by the University of East Anglia (UEA), on the 8th July 2024, convened shortly before our county devolution deal was to be signed. That deal has since been abandoned by the new government. A new robust devolution deal is desperately needed for Norfolk and Suffolk to deliver on this region's urgent and longer-term needs, specifically in health, skills and infrastructure. Herein are the views of many of the key individuals and organisations striving to create a more prosperous future; but we need stronger local powers to strengthen our ability to get on with the job of delivering economic growth here and for the rest of the country.

Working in close collaboration with Norfolk County Council, the UEA forum convened a meeting of 70 sector leaders and experts from across the county to produce, in an afternoon, the underlying expertise for the report you see before you. The aim was to provide the new government, or those in dialogue with it, a snapshot view of our collective strengths, needs and the investment opportunities the county offers.

Since the election on July 4th 2024, Norfolk has five political parties representing our ten constituencies: a radical shift from previous elections and making the county likely to be highly competitive in future elections. Many of our local MPs have been elected for the first time, and nationally many of our new ministers will be unfamiliar with Norfolk except in the broadest terms. This report intends to bring them up to speed with a strategically and politically important county.

Norfolk is a county with a unique geography, a distinctive economy and characterised by close-knit communities. Despite flood risk from a notable proportion of land below sea level, and a

coastline vulnerable to erosion, the county's environment is a great strength, attracting tourism to its beautiful Broads, Brecks and beaches. Norfolk plays a crucial role in agricultural and off-shore wind energy production. Additionally, close to 30% of the UK's gas arrives through Bacton Gas terminal on the Norfolk coast. Our strategic importance further extends to defence, where Norfolk is part of the wider defence platform of the Eastern region with UK, NATO and US bases located here or nearby. Beyond energy, defence and agriculture we also have a thriving and varied economy, encompassing diverse sectors such as financial services and creative industries.

The county's urban centre, Norwich, had an important role in the history of the UK's finance sector and to this day Aviva remains the city's largest employer. The county's rich cultural, heritage, literary and wider creative sectors are well established and punch above their weight. Yet, Norfolk shares similar difficulties to other areas of the country. Climate change impacts are directly affecting many communities, and health inequalities and deficient transport links are particularly acute problems across the county. Our strong communities are most familiar with the specific problems faced and are therefore best placed to propose the solutions to local challenges. This is the key to unlocking Norfolk's great potential.

The event described in this report, is an example of how universities can convene key stakeholders in an impartial environment that nurtures expertise. UEA holds strategic intelligence locally that can mobilise wider assets in the region. Universities have established support for economic growth in other areas of the country, but what would this look like for Norfolk? This report offers some key indications of how that could be organised in our county. Bringing together a wealth of local leaders and their sector-by-sector knowledge, we posed our invitees high level questions



RAF Paratroopers landing at the Royal Norfolk Show, June 2024

around infrastructure and economic growth. We co-produced with them, an agenda under the heading "What does Norfolk need to thrive?" and then recorded the thirty conversations that emerged in response to that agenda. These topics covered critical issues affecting the county with participants joining by expertise and interest. Each conversation was hosted by an expert from UEA, who also recorded the dialogue in prose form. A full account of each conversation makes up section four of this report.

Our university facilitators took those conversations, analysed them and distilled them into three key themes each with three or four subthemes. We added some context to each subtheme for readers who might not know East Anglia well and extracted thirty-three recommendations for further action from the summaries – most of which synthesise the content of several discussions from the day. This is the first half of the report.

In this document we present our new government with a set of thirty-three priority actions for our region determined by our anchor institutions, businesses and third sector organisations. We offer it to relevant ministers, local MPs, councils, public and private sector organisations as an advocacy tool to help them communicate the county's needs and to aid local coordination. It also serves as a foundational consultation document for Norfolk County Council's economic strategy.

We can also say that we see this event as a prefigurative set of relationships, and a potential practice, for how the county could approach the government's proposed local growth plans. An approach like this won't replace the expertise of specialist planners and economists, but it can ground their work, assist in consultations and provide inspiration and creativity in planning future activity.

As the national devolution agenda advances, the role that universities should play in delivering regional prosperity should be accounted for directly. We can develop new and relevant forms of knowledge and innovation for our place, but also convene a wide range of stakeholders in ways that avoid party political, market competition or other conflict.

Political hesitancy around the unfolding funding crisis in higher education puts this role at risk: to deliver on the Government's promise of regional economic growth and universities are crucial in meeting the economic needs of their places. In Norfolk, this report demonstrates how vital support from higher

education is needed locally for next generation skills provision in marine construction, applied agritech and creative technology, to name a few – as well, of course, on the critical skills gaps in areas like dentistry. That such a role functions effectively is important not just for the county, but for the country. As HM Lord Lieutenant Lady Dannatt aptly put it in her opening remarks: “We are a county that exports the fundamental materials of life and the ideas and imagination that makes that life good.”

Dr Johanna Forster and Dr Ben Little

Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellors Civic
University of East Anglia (UEA)

UEA's Civic Mission

At UEA, we believe that our local commitments, as formalised in our Civic Charter, compel us to act in partnership with local government and regional businesses for the greater economic, social and cultural good of our place. We enact that daily in our core business, but also in our corporate strategy – in leading the campaign for local dentistry training and tackling other health inequalities, in investing in applied food technologies and in support of our vibrant small business community and creative sectors. We are working actively with a range of partners to develop the skills base our county and region needs to thrive. But we can do more.

How to read this report

We intend for this report to put forward a true representation of the ideas and views shared by participants on the day of the forum. You might want to sit down and read this report cover to cover and we welcome you to do so. But if you have less time, we invite you to select topics in Chapter 3 (Summary and Analysis) and use this chapter as a main navigation point.

Chapter 3 extracts the interwoven themes and sub-themes of ideas that were shared at the discussion tables, along with their Recommendations for Action. Each sub-theme references by number the discussions tables it is drawn from, allowing you to easily find them in Chapter 4 (Discussion Notes) for a fuller record of the conversations that took place.

Read the [Civic Charter](#) here:





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SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF DISCUSSIONS

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This chapter draws out the wider underlying themes from the 30 discussions that took place during the “Executive Sandpit” forum. As below these have been categorised into 3 themes, each with their own sub-themes. All of the discussions that took place at the forum relate to at least one theme and sub-theme as listed below, but many relate to several of them.

1 Priority Sectors

- 1.1 Agriculture and Biotech
- 1.2 Energy
- 1.3 Integrated Cultural and Creative Economy
- 1.4 Financial Services and Growing the Digital Economy

2 Sustainable Foundational Economy

- 2.1 Land and Water
- 2.2 Health
- 2.3 Barriers to Shared Prosperity
- 2.4 Connectivity

3 Skills

- 3.1 Addressing Labour Force Gaps
- 3.2 New Skills Training
- 3.3 Raising Aspirations

1 PRIORITY SECTORS

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No two counties in the UK are the same, but Norfolk has a distinctive economic make-up, and the vast majority of the local economy can relate in some way to the four sectors in focus here. As reflected in the discussions, initiatives to unlock Norfolk's true potential and strengthen infrastructure need to relate to one or several of these sectors in order to be strategic and impactful.

1.1 AGRICULTURE AND BIOTECH

Written from discussion groups
1, 9, 11, 17, 24, 25, 26

Food production and agriculture are a key asset for our county. Widely regarded as the 'breadbasket' of the UK, Norfolk's fertile soils and favourable climate make it ideally placed to grow a wide range of agricultural crops for the UK. Norfolk is also a centre for excellence in food and plant science. With the [Norfolk Research Park](#), located near the [University of East Anglia \(UEA\)](#), therein lies one of Europe's largest groups of environmental, health, nutrition and plant science researchers, combining scientific excellence with farming expertise to drive innovations in food science and crop growing for the UK and beyond.

In keeping with the county's leading role in agricultural production, the [Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association](#) has for 175 years promoted the best in farming, food, livestock and machinery; hosting one of the country's largest food and farming shows each year on the outskirts of Norwich, by bringing together

farmers and producers, agricultural and biotech businesses, and world-leading food and crop scientists. The [Broadland Food Innovation Centre](#), a public-private research partnership between the UEA and [Broadland District Council](#) kickstarted in 2021 to champion the food and drink economy in East Anglia.

Norfolk already has a reputation for being one of the most progressive parts of the country for managing land for agricultural production, in harmony with nature. However, more support for farmers to innovate and invest in sustainable practices, and successfully access funding streams is required. Building farm clusters can help build trust, expertise and share the regulatory and administrative burden associated with accessing and managing private and public investment. With long-term investment in farm diversification, better in-county training, and closer connectivity between the agriculture and biotech sector, Norfolk has the opportunity to become the exemplar region in the UK for sustainable farming and food production, and nature recovery.

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Recommendations for Action

- Investment for in-county agricultural training provision would shore up a pipeline of next generation, new talent in the sector, for the county and beyond. The agricultural educational providers in our region with greater investment and connectivity between core partners and businesses would then have greater capacity to support up-skilling, aspirations and workforce gaps.
- Develop connectivity and integration between our region's excellence in biotech research and plant science, and agricultural infrastructure. Boost local commercial investment to aid scaling-up across the county's agricultural sector.
- Continue to develop the innovation pipeline, through greater support for intermediary companies and entrepreneurs, to further grow the county's mature economic clusters around agri-tech, agriculture, food and bioscience.

1.2 ENERGY

Written from discussion groups
9, 16, 17, 26, 27

The East of England Energy Zone, of which Norfolk is part, is leading the way in delivering sustainable low carbon energy solutions to underpin economic growth across the UK. The Norfolk coast around Great Yarmouth, heading down towards Lowestoft in Suffolk, is at the centre of the world's largest market for off shore wind, with close to 990 wind turbines in operation. Indeed, the unique mix of energy production in the Southern North Sea also hosts over 150 offshore gas assets, with Bacton Gas Terminal on the Norfolk coast, a processing plant of strategic national importance, supplying up to one-third of the UK's gas supply, as well as importing and exporting gas from Europe. Norfolk is unrivalled in terms of experience and expertise in this sector.

Growing the energy sector for Norfolk, both offshore and on-land is a key priority for the county with significant broader national impact. Support for growth of the offshore renewable industry will boost our regional economy by attracting talent and drive job creation, while showing growth to government around net zero commitments. Norfolk is leading the way in taking a whole ecosystem approach, with infrastructure projects emerging around energy distribution and solar farms. Norwich is poised to develop the largest urban solar farm in the UK. Due to rising energy costs and the needs of local business leaders to move to lower cost sustainable renewable energy, a project is underway in Norwich to become the first UK city to install its own solar energy grid. The project is open for businesses to invest in the network from Autumn 2024, and it is anticipated that the first solar panels will be installed on city rooftops in 2025. Together with the agricultural sector, wind and solar energy should be seen as our key economic drivers, in-county we must produce and retain our energy, using our natural assets offshore, and our fields on-land, for solar farming alongside agricultural production.

Recommendations for Action

- Locating engineering and high-end manufacturing for renewables close to deployment, bringing with it growth in talent and job creation for coastal towns and rural economies.

- Support for transitioning workforce from sunset industries, including oil and gas production, to maturing economic clusters with the capacity and ambition to grow further, such as renewable energy and engineering.
- Regional energy innovations are growing and need to be developed further. With examples underway, e.g. the 'Norwich Solar System' project led by the Norwich Business Improvement District (Norwich BID), there needs to be close partnership working and knowledge exchange between our civic and professional bodies, and the UEA and other innovators across the Norwich Research Park, to improve productivity and create nationally or world leading exemplars in this field.

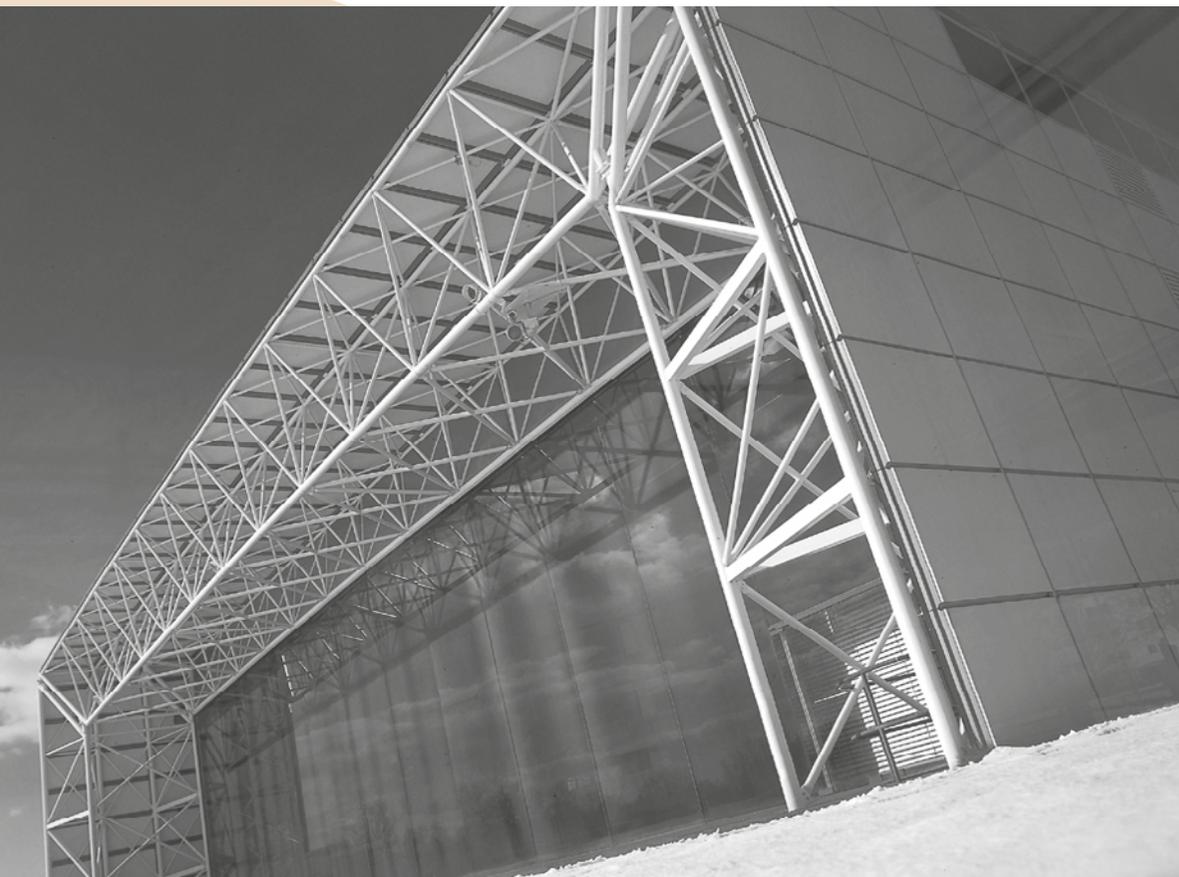


1.3 INTEGRATED CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ECONOMY

Written from discussion groups
8, 13, 17, 19

Norfolk has a productive cultural and creative economy tied closely to our heritage and tourism offer. With seven Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations and a historic environment in Norwich rated third in the country by the RSA, we have much to build on. From hosting England's first UNESCO City of Literature to long established artists colonies, to the emerging games industry supported by Norwich, University of the Arts (highly rated for its games provision), there is great potential in this space. The two universities (UEA and Norwich UA) are collaborating with the County Council and Norwich City Council to grow the screen sector in the county in a holistic way from breathtaking location shoots to post-production facilities, underpinned by the newly formed Norfolk Screen agency. The county's natural beauty, cultural offer and heritage sites dating back to the Ice Age has long made us a tourist destination.

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However, there are significant obstacles in developing these sectors in an holistic way. We need an integrated strategy to bring these overlapping areas together to maximise the economic, social and educational benefits these areas bring. Tertiary education providers (both technical and academic) need to work with employers and investors to ensure that skills developed in county can be turned to a local creative economy. Arts, cultural and digital training from primary through to higher education need increased investment with an orientation to the future of these sectors – in technical, creative, professional and leadership career paths. We need to ensure that a full career pipeline, from entry to mid-level to senior roles are available, so we don't lose talent to other regions.

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Recommendations for Action

- Integrated strategy and funding for cultural and creative sectors looking at specific technical and creative skills as well as transferable training within the broader sector. Look to drive inwards investment and lobby large companies to (re)locate here particularly around screen sector, promotional industries and video games – emphasising quality of life and relative cost advantages. This strategy should orientate us as a creative export economy.
- Develop the necessary skills training to enhance the digital economy with an emphasis on specific areas of regional need and expertise in the creative sector and beyond (e.g. Agriculture and Energy). This should form an integrated strategy involving primary to tertiary providers, academic and vocational training, including adult education and retraining opportunities.
- Continue to develop the tourism offer in the county, but integrating it with our cultural offerings, continued investment in our heritage environment and look to out of season opportunities to help make year-round use of our amenities, among local residents.

1.4 FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GROWING THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Written from discussion groups
3, 6, 9, 13, 28

As the historic home of both Aviva (formerly Norwich Union) and Barclays (formed through a merger with Gurney's Bank), Norwich was both a founding centre of British financial services and they continue to be the largest employer in the city. Mature industries such as insurance and legal services could work alongside the new engines of the digital economy – for example with the rise of FinTech as a key growth area – with the right incentives and strategic development in place.

Norfolk has key competitive advantages to make inward investment attractive with the right incentives: a lower cost base, high standard of living, and proximity to other centres such as London and Cambridge. Investment in the digital economy synergises effectively with ambitions for the creative industries, agri-tech and the energy sector in the county. A virtuous circle could be created if cross sector transferable skills were cultivated centred on upskilling and digital transition in the country more widely.

Yet challenges remain, hard infrastructural investment is needed to upgrade online access particularly in remoter rural areas, local skills provision could be better integrated with local providers to emphasise local needs. At present the digital skills gap was identified as both a key driver of marginalisation and inequality, and as a block on growth. We could look to develop already well-connected places for growth, such as Thetford which has good road and rail links, is close to Cambridge, Norwich and London and is far more affordable. This could be an ideal location for one of Labour's proposed new towns, with a specific economic plan for developing a digital innovation hub with regional partners to attract inward investment across the county.

Recommendations for Action

- Support digital transition for workforce across all sectors, but tied to a strategic vision of an emerging digital economy in the county.
- Look to develop a digital innovation hub tied to areas of existing excellence in the county (e.g. financial services, energy, creative industries and agri-tech).
- Target international investors though incentives, competitive cost-base, high standards of living and proximity to other centres – partner with national government to help them to achieve their plans for growth and new development in Norfolk.





2 SUSTAINABLE FOUNDATIONAL ECONOMY

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Successful initiatives to unlock the potential of Norfolk need strong and lasting foundations. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities in terms of our physical environment, health and inequality are particularly important for our county to address and should be fundamental in any efforts to bolster our regional infrastructure.

2.1 LAND & WATER

**Written from discussion groups
1, 3, 9, 17, 24**

Norfolk is a special place for nature; from the wild-life-rich sand dunes and saltmarsh of the North Norfolk Coast to the waterways of the Norfolk Broads, and the heathlands of the Brecks. Our county is home to a high proportion of the UK's most wildlife-rich habitats, and the City of Norwich is the only UK city located within a National Park. Our county is also at the frontier of impacts from climate change, noticeably along the coast where erosion of our sandy cliffs, a longstanding issue, has become ever more pressing for the communities living there. Homes, businesses, and livelihoods are being lost or damaged, due to exacerbating impacts of stronger and more frequent storms and flooding. The unpredictability of our climate and weather is playing havoc with our agricultural landscape, as threats from water security range from extreme flooding to drought.

The human footprint on our landscape is significant, with large swathes of land set aside for crops and livestock, to feed our county and beyond, and a growing need for more land set aside for housing, roads and other hard infrastructure to support economic and social growth. Here land-use management is complex but must address myriad needs and requirements and Norfolk is leading the way in dual purposing of land, encompassing approaches including rewilding, regenerative farming, and solar farms.

Bringing partners together to design and develop place-based approaches to land management and water security is critical if Norfolk is to prosper while living through environmental change. Leaders in the sector, [Anglian Water](#) and [The Broads Authority](#) have been working together with local farmers to look at solutions to the challenge of water security. This has included support for sustainable farming practices, seeking solutions from scientific and engineering perspectives, and developing best practice in community engagement. Furthermore, nature-based solutions have been pioneered in our county, with [North Norfolk District Council \(NNDC\)](#) delivering the first large-scale 'Sandscaping' project ever undertaken in the UK; an innovative soft-engineering approach trailed at the coastal villages of Bacton and Walcott, affording them and the nationally important Bacton Gas Terminal, natural protection for several years to come. Following this, NNDC are leading on the [DEFRA](#) and [Environment Agency](#) funded Coastwise initiative to transition and prepare coastal communities where the coast is eroding.

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Recommendations for Action

- Develop a fully-integrated, place-based approach to water management, including pioneering innovations in nature-based solutions. Reaching across silos and sectors, to fully join up expertise.
- Continue to support innovative, multi-purpose use of land, bringing together sector leaders across land management, farming and agriculture, conservation and energy to support sustainable landscape management.
- Investment in fair and effective management of our coastline. Communities at risk need safe and just futures, given rapid environmental change and the uncertainty around funding for coastal protection.

2.2 HEALTH

Written from discussion groups
10, 14, 21, 26

Since 2020, health and care services in Norfolk and Waveney (in Suffolk), have been formally designated as an Integrated Care System (ICS). Working together in partnership, this brings together NHS organisations, local authorities, the third sector and patient groups, aiming to improve care and join-up services. Norfolk is a county of extremes, with pockets of affluence, but many more communities with poor health and social care needs. Deprived communities across the county often feel forgotten, experiencing health and social inequalities, and with an aging population, the situation is set to worsen without greater investment in key health services. Potential solutions include public health programmes directed at areas of greatest need, such as 'Nourishing Norfolk' which currently has 26 food hubs, also acting as a gateway to other services. Steps are being taken to make West Norfolk a 'Marmot Place', recognising that health and health inequalities are often shaped by the social determinants of health, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, thus focusing place-based action to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

Norfolk would like to see improvements in productivity, but these will only come about if we address some of the root causes of the productivity gap. There is a significant negative impact on productivity from health inequalities, for example from malnutrition including under-nourishment, obesity and micronutrient deficiencies, or from unaddressed dental issues. The DWP-funded 'Working Well Norfolk', currently provides mentoring support for individuals, helping to support people with long-term health conditions start work, or stay in work.

By national standards, some of Norfolk's health statistics are particularly bleak, and none more so than for oral health, and particularly in young children, where the county has earned the unenviable reputation as a 'dentistry desert'. The University of East Anglia (UEA), with support from Norfolk County Council, has obtained cross-party support from the region's MPs to set up a Dental School, in recognition of the parlous situation of NHS dentistry across the county. Positive impacts here are likely to be strengthened by effective reform of the national dental funding model.

The UEA and the Norwich Research Park (NRP) also undertake some of the highest quality research into nutrition anywhere in the country. There is a dietary solution to health prescribing – enriching foods with additional nutrients that solve or manage health conditions. We need businesses to invest to get these impactful research ideas out to consumers. Government investment to incentivise this work, could offer much needed support to the collaborative efforts already being undertaken here between local government, UEA and the NRP, plus our Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Recommendations for Action

- Investment in a regional Dentistry School. There is an urgent need to address Norfolk's dental desert through supporting the establishment of a dental school at the University of East Anglia.
- Address health-related root causes (e.g. malnutrition, mental health, obesity) of productivity gap, through supporting individuals back into the workforce, and offering financial support and incentives in ongoing research to impact pathways.
- Fully integrated and long-term investment for social care systems working across complex rural geographies.



2.3 BARRIERS TO SHARED PROSPERITY

Written from discussion groups
2, 4, 7, 10, 12, 14, 19, 20, 21, 29, 30

Norfolk is marked by contrasting areas of great prosperity and inequality – of contemporary dynamism and historic decline. This contrast is reflected both in our towns and cities and more rural and coastal areas, although the causes vary. Norwich is a wealthy city, but with pockets of extreme deprivation, while Great Yarmouth, once one of the wealthiest towns in the country due to the booming herring fisheries is now a priority area for renewal due to the complex of economic, health and social problems its population face. Kings Lynn is a different place again, but with different strengths to build a future renewal on.

Norfolk is more homogenous than many other parts of England. Yet it has a long history of welcoming migrants dating back to migration from the Low Countries in the 16th Century. But the county is becoming increasingly diverse, and we need to have different requirements to understand and viewpoints incorporated within economic and social strategy. For many groups the demographics might be small, but modest steps now will make a significant difference as the county's demography continues to change. At the same time an aging rural population often associated with wealthier retirees, exists alongside pockets of economic isolation, driven by changing labour practices in agriculture and long-term underinvestment. High house prices in rural areas are pushing younger workforces further from places of work adding additional expense, commuter times and the need for public transport improvements, while making economic activity and social care provision hard to maintain in some rural areas.

While work is being done to address these issues, much of the strategic growth planned for the economy is focused on traditionally male areas of work, bringing in much needed jobs, but distributed unevenly through the economy. Women need access to new industries but should be recognised as a distinct part of the labour force and economy who must be addressed directly at a strategic level. One key barrier to productivity is the cost of childcare, combined with the difficulties of recruiting and retaining skilled nursery staff, reducing both demand and supply of nursery places. There are challenges here around motivation and rates of pay, as there are across the health and social care and education

sectors, which need to be addressed. Similarly social care in a rural environment presents complex problems involving transport and increasingly the use of technology in service provision can pose a barrier for those who need to navigate services, but lack some of the necessary digital skills.

Additionally, both agriculture and tourism have seasonal working patterns and this can lead to underemployment over the calendar year. A skills strategy that addresses upskilling workers in these sectors should focus on developing year-round employment.

Recommendations for Action

- A distinct women's enterprise and employment strategy should be produced and embedded in other wider economic planning covering gender inequalities in specific industries as well as barriers created through expensive social and childcare systems and gaps therein. [Norwich City Council](#) has been working on this for some time and has recommendations to draw upon through the 'Norwich as a Gendered Economy Report' (part of the Good Economy Commission – a partnership involving the City Council, [UEA](#) and others).
- Marginalised groups should be identified and given representation within strategic bodies to ensure diverse perspectives on the future of the county. We should start from the position that communities of all types know their own needs, strengths and ambitions best, but many need support and basic amenities to enable them to articulate those needs to local authorities and other stakeholders.
- Seasonality must be addressed in any skills strategy, with a view to year-round employment particularly in coastal and rural areas. Such a strategy must be developed in conjunction with transport planning if seasonal work may physically take place across county.

2.4 CONNECTIVITY

Written from discussion groups
2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23

Nearly every issue raised in the discussions had a transport and connectivity element. The problems are well established – poor centre to centre links, non-existent cross county links and the challenges faced putting in place financially viable new connections. Much of Norfolk’s population lives in rural housing across the 500-650 parishes within the county. Focus tends to be given to the transport links to the main city and market towns ensuring that there is connectivity to and from these areas. However, many communities within Norfolk are disconnected from the main population centres and from each other by not having adequate and regular access to the public transport network.

The current public transport provision does not connect the whole county together and car journeys are essential. For example, there is no rail infrastructure to connect the east and west of the county – it is also impossible to travel between Norwich and Kings Lynn without going out of the county to change trains at Ely. The central land area of the county, that include the market towns of Fakenham, Aylsham, Reepham, Swaffham, Dereham, Watton and Hingham have no rail connectivity at all.

A number of possible ways to address this were considered, for example out of use rail links the so-called ‘Beeching’ routes, could be repurposed as dedicated public transport lines and used by autonomous buses, this could restore connectivity between rural locations at a potentially lower running cost than traditional bus or rail transport. Other suggestions include developing a rural variant of 15 minute cities, taking a clustering approach to villages and distributed services with integrated transport. However most importantly, transport links and strategic economic planning need to be integrated more fully with bus, rail and road all coordinated to end isolation and ensure rural communities have access to towns and to each other. Existing resources such as libraries could be adapted to act as hubs for new services including transport.

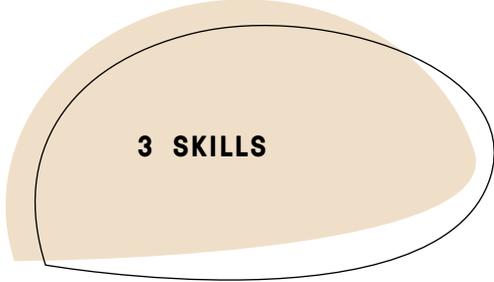
Norfolk was historically closely connected to mainland Europe and in some ways it is easier and quicker to get to the heart of Amsterdam than it is to London. Serious consideration

should be given as to how to redevelop those links to Europe as there are economic, environmental and social opportunities in growing those connections particular to Norfolk – including the possibility of sea-borne transport through new port-infrastructure being developed in Great Yarmouth. Much of the proposals depend on upgraded road infrastructure and digital infrastructure too.

Recommendations for Action

- Improving connectivity between rural communities with a hub-based approach to sharing facilities and services across geographies. Tie a new rural area transport strategy to the above, to unlock potential and include marginalised communities. Explore innovative ways to use existing infrastructure and out of use connections – i.e. repurposing “Beeching Lines” for autonomous public transit.
- Investment in hard infrastructure – roads, rail and broadband – to improve economic growth potential in-county. Key roads such as the A47 must become dual carriageways.
- Explore enhancing international links, particularly to neighbouring countries with similar challenges (e.g. The Netherlands).





3 SKILLS

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Norfolk has some very real opportunities in terms of skills, but also faces its own challenges. The principle sectors as outlined at the beginning of this chapter have their own specific skills needs which are not always matched perfectly by the population. But this isn't just about serving our industries. Upskilling is a good thing in itself for communities across Norfolk and we should take advantage of the infrastructure we already have to deliver this.

3.1 ADDRESSING LABOUR FORCE GAPS

**Written from discussion groups
1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 12, 13, 20, 24**

Gaps in essential workers are a consistent problem across the country, exacerbated by disentanglement with European labour markets and restricted access to skills training on the Continent where provision is more sophisticated. The UK is in the process of re-orientating skills provision to this new reality and many sectors, including in Norfolk, are dependent on migrant work forces. This creates skills training challenges (partly as described below), but also wider labour market difficulties in attracting and retaining talent, which has the effect of limiting growth, particularly for SMEs who may need to relocate closer to relevant labour forces as they expand. Business also point to “soft skills” still being an issue for recruiting staff.

As a strategically important area of the UK in terms of defence, energy production and agriculture, it is vital that Norfolk

can recruit, retain, and train the talent we need to deliver the benefits we bring to the rest of the country. This means addressing the problem holistically so that domains such as housing, health, education and lifestyle factors are considered alongside economic development skills and training. Regional branding has, until recently, been focused on tourism, but more recent efforts to re-brand Norfolk as high living standard, lower cost option for professionals could also be developed. Even with lower housing costs, the transition from entry level work to a career supporting home ownership is made difficult by a lack of mid-level opportunities. This creates a chicken-egg situation where companies don't grow or relocate due to labour force factors, and the labour force equally has to move away for career development opportunities. It is a common phenomenon that many move back to the area to raise families for lifestyle reasons, often paradoxically leading to underemployment for skilled workers who then have to work intermittently or return to entry level roles. There are deep structural inefficiencies in this arrangement, which if addressed holistically could lead to considerable growth in the region.

In certain areas, such as dentistry, the specialist labour force is so low that urgent investment is needed in developing regional training provision (i.e. a dentistry school) so that there is a stronger chance for qualified graduates to remain in the region. Similarly, translation between regional food technology expertise and agricultural innovation is stymied by the difficulties faced by local agricultural colleges to attract tutors. Similar problems are faced in construction and engineering where to deliver electricity grid, housing upgrades and modern construction standards for new homes to meet net zero commitment, serious skills shortages must be met across the UK. In Norfolk this is compounded by the specialist engineering expertise needed to manage significant portions of national energy supply being produced in the Southern North Sea.

Recommendations for Action

- A holistic approach of labour market need should be built into economic and infrastructure strategies. Lifestyle benefits should be considered alongside infrastructural development and economic incentives to attract medium to large firms to base in Norfolk or local businesses to grow here.

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- An understanding that labour force problems are not solely skills related, but part of a wider set of socio-economic challenges will make growth initiatives more likely to succeed.
- Urgent investment is needed in areas of critical shortage such as dentistry, modern construction methods and agricultural training in addition to the above.



3.2 NEW SKILLS TRAINING

Written from discussion groups
2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 23

Addressing the skills gap is a country-wide challenge, but one that Norfolk can show leadership in across key sectors. Vital is the need to equip young people with the right skills for jobs that meet future demands and contexts. Inspiring talent from primary school to higher education and beyond. We know we need to improve sustainability across sectors, and that we need to think innovatively about developing different types of training pathways, pipelines and partnerships.

New strategies to join up education and training providers can support the development of key industries. For example, in Norfolk this could support the promotion of priorities and opportunities for the creative and digital industries, creating careers pipelines through entire education pathways. This may also include increasing apprenticeships and work experience opportunities, and combining with private investment mechanisms, to support young people to be 'work ready'. Closer collaborations between our two universities, the Norwich Research Park, and multiple further education colleges, together with industry partners is key to success in future-proofing skills development and provision.

Creating a sustainable innovation pipeline of talent for the region will require focus at different stages of the pipeline, depending on the current maturity of the economic sector involved e.g. agri-tech, bioscience. Clearer access is required to support individuals and businesses to access funding for upskilling, training and mentoring support, and for this to be visibly inclusive to support the whole population. 'Seedcorn funding' is more accessible than venture capital in Norfolk, although steps are being taken through the Norwich Research Park to address this, and to explore investment zone opportunities.

Adapting to a changing climate, while meeting our net zero commitments means greater emphasis is required to up-skill in green technology and construction methods. We need more incentives from businesses and industry to fund and train in greener technologies and practices, to ensure our hard infrastructure meets sustainability targets. Current apprenticeship schemes

and existing resources for skills and training should be diverted to greening the economy in every sector.

Increasingly academic structures are set up for qualifications over skills, and often soft skills development is left under resourced. This is particularly critical in areas of social and economic deprivation, where educational outcomes may be lower. Our young people need holistic skills training, to include confidence in interpersonal skills, as well as experiential and digital learning; integrated with qualifications and career pathways. Linking businesses with schools can improve skills development, and can boost ambition and aspiration, particularly in areas of most need.

Recommendations for Action

- New place-based strategy to join-up education and training providers with key industries, working alongside local companies to deliver a more active and productive workforce ecosystem.
- Creating digital and creative careers pipelines through entire education pathways from primary school to adult education.
- Training and up-skilling entrepreneurs orientated in key industries e.g. agri-tech, bioscience.

3.3 RAISING ASPIRATIONS

Written from discussion groups
2, 9, 10, 12, 20

Ambition and social mobility walk hand-in-hand. Norfolk punches above its weight in terms of innovative partnership and collaboration working, yet the county could do more to sell itself as inspirational for young people; often linked to its rural geography, poor transport links to support connectivity and social mobility, and areas of social and economic deprivation with fewer job opportunities. Norfolk's prosperous future relies in part on changing these perceptions to inspire the next generation.

Access to education is vital, from school aged to adult learners. This can be particularly challenging for parts of the county with complex demographics and geographies, where connectivity is lower both in terms of transport links and digital provision. A more holistic approach to accessing education and by association, raising aspirations, could be through 'careers nurturing'. This could include seeking to connect with role



models in the community, to boost ambition and aspiration; through working closer with businesses or industry leaders and other organisations to highlight necessary skills and personal attributes and to showcase career choices and opportunities. Regarding diversity and inclusivity, businesses may also need greater support to promote opportunities for neurodiverse young people, or those leaving prison or the military. Higher and Further Education providers can play a part here, with examples like City College Norwich supporting those with mental health issues, working as a broker for students into businesses.

Diversity in the existing leadership at civic levels needs attention, as it often does not reflect the views and experiences of younger people. Leadership roles feel impenetrable for younger people even more so if you are from a deprived area. With few mentors or trailblazers to look up to, this can feed into a lack of inspiration and ambition. We need a sea change in how we think about civic leadership, for the next generation – to put in place measures to ensure young people with aspirations can access pathways to future leadership roles and play a critical part in the future strategic needs of the county and beyond.

Recommendations for Action

- Create opportunities for civic and business leadership for people of all backgrounds, with supportive mentoring and holistic training to foster a pipeline of diverse leaders across the county.
- Encouraging regional employers to equally weight different educational pathways, particularly important for people who have greater access needs to education.
- Vocational education pathways need to include civic and contextual training.





4

THE DISCUSSION TOPICS

This section provides the 30 discussion topics that emerged from the event, as suggested by participants. The format of this section details:

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- **The Topic Proposer** was the person that put forward the idea at the beginning of the afternoon.
- **The Discussion Host** was a UEA member of staff who took the role of facilitating conversation and recording the following notes.
- **Participants** were able to join and contribute to the discussions they were most interested in.

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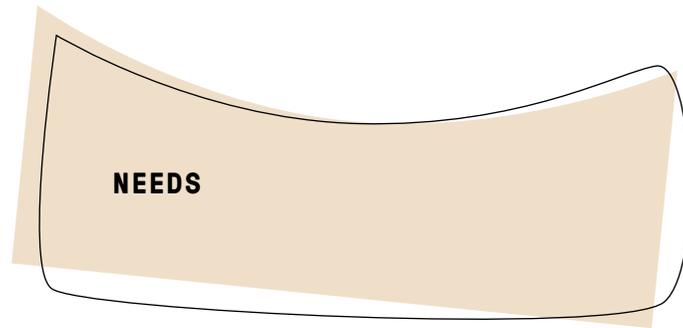
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1 How do we achieve a thriving environment?

Topic Proposer: Andrea Kelly

Discussion Host: Alex Bratt

Participants: Kristopher Harper-Allison, Julian Blow, Heather Jermy, Asher Minns, Suresh Weerasinghe, Roberta Willner, Andrea Kelly.

Participants talked about many issues that currently affect the state of the environment here in Norfolk. For example, above average rainfall is having a huge impact on our landscape, affecting everything from food security to vulnerability to flooding. Re-wilding can make a big impact, even small changes can lead to positive change, but must not be seen as a panacea. The question asked was, how to support farmers to make these changes? Larger farming estates tend to be better connected with funders. They also have capacity to horizon-scan and respond better to opportunities for funding to improve the environment. Smaller farmers cannot afford to access such advice, so could local government plug this gap?

How do we work with and influence the next generation of farmers? Could we use a model farm network to explore ideas around yield and biodiversity? Agricultural colleges are struggling in the region and not properly funded and there is a tutor shortage which makes up-skilling difficult; and yet Norfolk should be the perfect place for such institutions. We need

to connect agriculture with the region's excellence e.g. in Bio-Tech. There is excellent paludiculture infrastructure in the region – affecting soil carbon levels ... This could be done at scale across our agriculture infrastructure. But where is the local commercial pull to invest in agriculture – network mapping could be useful to drive this?

We need long-term thinking and we need to be able to communicate the benefits of long-term investment to government. In recent history we have not had a long-term plan and this has had a negative impact on the environment. There are often strings attached to strategic funding and the incentives are not clear. We could do more to strengthen the connections between investors, research and development and end users. For example, bring environmental factors into commercialisation is a way of driving meaningful investment c.f. Coca Cola's Norfolk Rivers Trust's (NRT's) partnership with Coca-Cola, [World Wide Fund for Nature](#) and [The Rivers Trust](#).

2 How do we recruit the best young people to study and stay in Norfolk?

Topic Proposer: Felicity Perry

Discussion Host: Paul Tabern

Discussion Participants: Neil Hall, Martin Blackwell, Nova Fairbank, Stuart Cotton, Karina Benning, Liam Robinson, Chris Atkin, Phil Steele, Kay Mason Billig, Felicity Perry.

Increasingly academic structure is set up for qualifications over skills. Perception of 'oven ready' talent across HE providers needs to change as collectively Norfolk isn't equipping young people with the right skills for jobs or meet existing or future needs. Vital to inspire students from primary school age via tangible examples of how interests, aspirations, skills, personality can be aligned to career choices.

Gender & diversity is still a challenge in multiple industries. Participants cited evidence of this being the case. How can we help young people 'find their place and their people'?

The work experience students in this group discussion said they are taught knowledge, but not how it relates to application in real life or in future careers. Work experience is transformational but equates to approximately 1 week in an entire secondary education.

Deprivation is a critical issue. Can we develop skillsets in young people based around curriculum that can be aligned with careers. We should look at examples of success in other regions and think, how can we learn from this and apply it here? Soft skills, confidence, digital skills should be at forefront to enable young people to transition between study and work. Could these be taught in a nuanced way utilising real world examples. Can we frame opportunities for young people to have autonomy in roles and feel they can 'invest' in their place? Kay Mason Billig stated there is £12m of Adult Education funding for Norfolk, and a large proportion is given to training providers out of region – Devolution can help to reverse this, but we should focus funding on principal areas of strength such as Agritech and Hydrogen to support high value and regionally important careers.

There is a need to bring new talent into the area. Ultimately is Norfolk seen as somewhere that people go to retire or go on holiday – do we have a problem with how we are branded as a county?

Collaboration is absolutely critical. Visibility and ownership of initiatives.

If companies come in and speak to students they increase their chances of understanding what the skills gaps are, where the future talent is, and how to guide it. There shouldn't be a minimum age to reach out and engage.

It is a challenge to keep young people in the city and region due to costs of living and housing. We need to look at other examples in the UK where 15-minute cities are developing, where there are increased travel links, better transport connections, affordable housing, city spaces are utilised – for example over shops, there is a huge potential here rather than only using poorly connected housing estates that are deemed unaffordable.

How can we connect supply chains of companies, this is a capacity issue, how can we get this unstuck and drive-up engagement to promote keeping young people in the region – how do we incentivise this? We focus on attracting people to University but not making them stay!

Enhance the opportunity of the growth sectors, to become the destination of choice for these areas and promote them as the only place to be – aligned with government NSIPs there is a compelling narrative to study here in Norfolk and stay. Government needs to help enhance our reputation and promote opportunity through support for initiatives, company incentives and infrastructure needs.

Topic Proposer: Dr Robin Price

Discussion Host: Beth Sowersby

Discussion Participants: Prof Louis Nixon, Dr Robin Price.

Norfolk is at the frontier of impacts from climate change, with real unpredictability in our weather and threats to water security ranging from floods to droughts.

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Anglian Water has been working with partners including the Broads Authority and farmers, to look at how to create a joined up approach to water security. With moves into regenerative farming, they are keen to explore the impact this may have on the landscape and how it can help the issues around water we are facing. This year for example, the county has had the wettest winter, and most of that water has been pumped into the sea. And yet, there is risk of drought during the summer. The question is, how can we think of creative joined up solutions to address this?

Louis Nixon discussed the new immersive and simulation lab at Norwich University of the Arts which has been working with the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, and the Broads Authority, using data sets to visualise future landscapes. This is where artists and storytellers come in, helping people understand complex problems.

Robin Price from Anglian Water, discussed how they approach problems from a science and engineering perspective, but a big challenge they have is around engaging communities. They are seeing farm clusters which have some hard to engage landowners. How might the arts or social sciences be used to engage these hard to reach communities?

Discussion led on to the potential to make Norfolk a global exemplar for nature-based solutions. Projects such as Wendling Beck were offered as example projects, and participants discussed carbon sequestration possibility in both peatlands and saltmarshes.

It was suggested there is money to invest in the environment but there is a lack of joined-up thinking and inspiration from government. Participants asked how can nature based solutions be brought into the main stream?

The key takeaway was that we need a 'Place-Based approach to water security'. We need to join this all up, reach out to other sectors and understand how to engage people in the challenge. Norfolk has every water challenge there is, so we have scope to try things differently to address this, but we need a joined-up place-based approach to be effective.

Topic Proposer: Saul Humphrey

Discussion Host: Justine Mann

Discussion Participants: Kathryn Coventry, Anthony Hudson, Bhargav Trivedi, Asher Minns, Saul Humphrey.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The construction industry in the UK is woefully unprepared for climate change both now and in the future. It is a broken system, with sub sub-contractors who are not skilled in green technology carrying out the work of the five largest UK-wide builders with no funding or time to train in greener technology/practice. Further education training for the construction industry is traditional and not currently equipping or future proofing the next generation of builders with modern sustainable practice skills. For example, the target for 26m homes to have heat source pumps is nonsensical if there are no skilled workers to implement them. Building materials are also not sustainable e.g. we need to cease using concrete and look for alternatives.

Should there be a School for the Built Environment at UEA, or should our Engineering School expand to meet the needs for skills and research in this area?

Current apprenticeship schemes and existing resources for skills and training should be diverted to greening the economy in every sector. If a new apprenticeship standard is emerging, it should have a green focus and reformat the skills agenda.

A green jobs agenda in Norfolk could improve social mobility in our most deprived areas.

STRATEGIC MEASURES AND QUICK WINS

Adaptation to climate change should be positioned as a major opportunity for our county.

Norfolk could secure investment from central government as an exemplar county. A large proportion of Norfolk is beneath sea level. We are also the breadbasket of the entire country and need to protect our rural economy. A risk assessment of the county should shape every strategy. We need to put in resilience measures before disaster strikes. Sustainable development should be a founding principal of every action in our county and threaded holistically through all infrastructure and planning decisions including those which touch on construction.

Currently, biodiversity and climate change is perceived as 'red tape' in construction. The planning system needs to incentivise sustainability to see an immediate change. Government should offer subsidies to further incentivise.

Any plans for growth e.g. road building must be mapped to the carbon footprint, not just in terms of emissions but in terms of building materials.

Qualitative data from vulnerable communities should be employed alongside quantitative data and surveys.

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How do we make Norfolk's 500-650 low-income parishes connect with their own / other communities? (Sustainable Transport)

Topic Proposer: Michael Newey

Discussion Host: Sarah Walker

Discussion Participants: Charlotte Crawley, Anna Douglas, Michael Newey.

Much of Norfolk's population lives in rural housing across the 500-650 parishes within the county. Much focus is given to the transport links to the main city and market towns ensuring that there is connectivity to and from these areas. However, many communities within Norfolk are disconnected from the main population centres and from each other by not having adequate and regular access to the public transport network.

Norfolk is a low-income economy with many rural home occupants belonging in this category. Rural housing is important to our economy, and it is essential to have a viable and sustainable transport plan that enables populations to travel easily without a car. Access to bad or no public transport diminishes the social mobility of this group cosigning them to remain in, or close to poverty. Easy access to employment, schooling, shopping and social activities is limited to within a small area potentially restricting people to within their own local environments. The cost of housing in rural villages is high at around 8.5 times the average wage, thereby pricing young people out of living locally – and not attracting new people to the area, because of the high transport costs associated with living in these areas.

The current public transport provision does not connect the whole county together and car journeys are essential. For example, there is no rail infrastructure to connect the east and west of the county – it is also impossible to travel between Norwich and Kings Lynn without going out of the county to change trains at Ely. The central land area of the county, that include the market towns of

Fakenham, Aylsham, Reepham, Swaffham, Dereham, Watton and Hingham have no rail connectivity at all.

Bus travel is also not adequate, an example was provided of a return travel plan from North Elmham to Norwich, via Dereham using a bus route. The initial walk was a mile to the bus stop, then two buses arriving in Norwich after 9am in the morning. To then make the last of the bus connections on the return journey it was necessary to leave the office at 15.15 making a full time 9-5 working day impossible.

Solution: Conduct a transport survey that asks what time people need to travel, where do they need to go, what time they need to travel? Analyse where this is village to village, village to market town, village to city and inclusive of the populations ages and look to provide affordable and reliable transport options. Crucially not how the population currently travels.

There is existing latent and untapped demand with the 'Beeching rail routes' still part of the infrastructure. If these were regenerated into guided bus routes / rail lines it would be possible for contractors to look at developing existing villages with shops, schools and communities becoming more sustainable through use and size. These opportunities can be highlighted with a venn diagram overlaying the increased transport links with existing villages that can be expanded.

Investment: The physical scale of these suggestions will require funding with various options for consideration such as not for profit funding for public transport with rail and bus. EU money could potentially be an option as could borrowing to pay for this, dependent on government fiscal rules.

World-class connections: transport + digital (rural nature of Norfolk)

Topic Proposer: Esme Yuill

Discussion Host: Diego Durantini

Discussion Participants: Bevin, Matt Tracey, James Bemment, Mike Rigby, Esme Yuill

Participants discussed a range of issues associated with the current provision of transport across Norfolk, particularly associated with rural connectivity. currently, homes and town developments are spreading, and will drive change in transport connections. It would be more functional to plan regional growth and transport links together. Often Park and Ride does not work as an option for people – once people are in a car, they do not want to get out of it if not at their final destination.

As Norfolk is a low population density county, often connections are sparse, which in turn makes running a transport line not economically viable. Rural

connectivity is poor in the county, and needs to be improved to allow for smarter connections. A solution could be, a cluster of villages could be created where one of the villages acts as a hub, not only for transport but also for essential facilities and services for the community. MaaS – Mobility as a Service could also be a solution.

Single rail track at Trowse and Ely are a key bottleneck that need to be removed to be able to improve train frequency.

Unrelated, the lack of enough and high quality accommodation/lodging has been brought up as a bottleneck for Norwich to attract major events.



How to get better services for the disadvantaged, get more women into high growth sector jobs and not leave anyone behind

Topic Proposer: Ruth Pearson and Jackie Thornton

Discussion Host: Fiona Lettice

Discussion Participants: Katy Rutherford, Esme Yuill, Bhangar Triveshi, Tracey Drake, David Powles, Ruth Pearson, Jackie Thornton

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A report commissioned by the [Norwich Good Economy Commission](#) “[Norwich as a Gendered Economy](#)” showed that economic strategy neglects where women are working in the economy. The report had recommendations to address getting more women into higher paid jobs including targeted support for self-employed women, support for women to enter high growth sectors, a childcare plan for Norwich and re-evaluating and prioritising social care. These issues need to be addressed as the economic strategy is developed and not later. Investment in social infrastructure has a good impact on the economy overall.

For childcare, positive outcomes can be achieved but it needs investment beyond Early Years. Childcare to cover long school holidays is too expensive. There is only for those on the very lowest incomes help (eg Holiday Activity Fund – although this might be lost from September), but many more struggle.

There are many barriers to accessing jobs, from knowing what to wear for interview, how to get there (transport costs), and who will look after children while at the interview. Universal Credit may also be lost with a net negative impact on monthly income, especially when you add in transport and childcare costs.

Although there has been some positive progress with flexible working, paid paternity leave, shorter working weeks and Real Living Wage, with positive examples and initiatives from local businesses like

Aviva and Norse, and good practice nationally e.g. [Transport for London](#) has a Carers’ Charter, it is not enough and businesses are not systematically tackling how to get disadvantaged people into work and to make it easier for them to continue to work.

Adult Education Funding tends to focus on courses, but then once you have a qualification, there is a gap and a lack of transitional pathways to being able to secure a job.

Devolution could provide an opportunity with funding used to rethink investment strategies and push innovative thinking to break these persistent barriers to employment, as change so far has been slow. And part of the focus needs to be on getting more women into traditionally male sectors, which are not attractive for women with caring responsibilities as they may have difficult shift patterns, require working in different locations, have very early starts etc. Taking a pilot approach and properly addressing this could bring attention to Norfolk (the county could trailblaze such an approach).

There is an opportunity to influence the [Hydrogen developments at Bacton](#) – get changes in early and invest in services there to encourage a more diverse workforce. Examples could include affordable childcare onsite, staggered drop off and pick up times (for shift workers). Initiatives should be demand driven and not supply driven.

What is needed to better support creative and cultural arts in Norwich/Norfolk?

Proposed By Ben Stopher

Discussion Host: Hannah Jackson

Discussion Participants: Chris Gribble, Julia Devonshire, Kaavous Clayton, Paula Sanchez, Stuart Cotton, Lorna Harper.

There is no one distinct creative industry, digital and cultural plan or working group in Norfolk that brings the sector together. If this could be developed, and the issues considered separately to being considered alongside economic development, there would be opportunities for the sector to collaborate more effectively to identify funding sources and channel that funding. A Devolution deal in Norfolk could be used to ring fence funding for strategic investment in creative and cultural industries.

This plan/working group/board could also help to promote the priorities, knowledge, understanding, recognition and opportunities for the creative industry in Norfolk. The county needs to be able to identify the key creative industries that Norfolk should be known for creatively and actively promote this.

There is a need to identify priorities for creative arts education from Key Stage 3 upwards. Although there is a good creative arts educational offer in the county it is not as comprehensive as it has been in the past and could be expanded through our universities and colleges, including increasing apprenticeship and work experience/placement opportunities to support young people to be ‘work ready’.

Norfolk has a talented pool and expertise in the area of film production, and emerging virtual production training, but often loses out on large production opportunities to other regions such as Manchester due to the availability of incentive funds and regional funding opportunities.

The Town Deal Board is considering how best to deliver a creative workspaces in Norwich but more affordable and diverse options are needed, not only in large towns and cities but across the county as a whole. A policy on ‘meanwhile space’ should be developed to bring temporary redundant space into productive use in an ambitious way to support the creative industry, and enable creatives to utilise the available without having to commit to long-term leases.

Other important considerations include:

- how Norfolk could work more closely with Suffolk to pool resources and talent;
- how the creative and tourism industries could work more closely together; and
- how creative links between Norwich and Kings Lynn can be better developed given that transport links are better between Kings Lynn and Cambridge/London compared to Kings Lynn and Norwich.

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Topic Proposer: Nicola Hancock

Discussion Host: Vivien Easson

Discussion Participants: Nicola Hancock, Jonathan Jones, Mike Rigby, Chris Starkie, Andrew Jamieson, Naresh Pandit.

50 Creating a sustainable innovation pipeline for the region will require focus at different stages of the pipeline, depending on the current maturity of the economic sector involved. It needs to be much clearer how individuals and businesses can access funding, upskilling, training and mentoring support, and for this to be visibly inclusive to support good ideas from across the whole population. Seedcorn funding is easier to find than venture capital in Norfolk, although steps are being taken through the [Norwich Research Park](#) to address this, and to explore investment zone opportunities.

Mature economic clusters with capacity to grow further within the region include: financial services; agriculture, food, bioscience and agri-tech; renewable energy engineering and high-end manufacturing. Other mature economic sectors such as fishing, or oil and gas production, will need support for their workforce to transition away from these sunset industries and towards those dawning in the East such as renewable energy engineering. Taking a whole ecosystem approach will also enable essential infrastructure projects like energy distribution and solar farms.

It will be especially important to mentor and support young people with good ideas, to educate them in entrepreneurial mindsets, and to emphasise what they stand to gain from being located in a county that actively supports talent development and new business concepts. We want to be more confident and

shout more loudly about our many successes, such as Tropic Biosciences or the innovative Coastwise project for North Norfolk. We also want to extend the innovation toolkit developed at [UEA](#) across Norfolk, for example through the Connected Innovation hubs.

Norwich is a highly innovative and progressive city with great potential to become an incubator of new talent, whether for small independent video game studios, brand consultancies or bioscience start-ups. The separation of the region from Cambridge and London is large enough to give new ideas space to be born, grow and thrive, while still allowing regular cross-pollination from those larger centres of innovation.

The affordable, well-connected town of Thetford lies halfway between Norwich and Cambridge, on the main rail line, and has potential to expand both its cultural heritage and technology industries. Better rail connectivity would help support innovation, for example via a direct train service from Great Yarmouth through Norwich, Thetford and Ely through to Cambridge and London, or by joining up the county with a service to King's Lynn. While some highly-skilled workers relocate out of Norfolk to satisfy their aspirations, many people also return to Norfolk for the quality of life and culture of independent thinking. With a clear, simple and sustainable innovation pipeline, adapted to support people at all stages of life and expertise, the whole county can flourish.

Topic Proposer: Catherine Waddams and Tracey Drake

Discussion Host: Hayley Mace

Discussion Participants: Becky Price, Saskia Hervey, Jackie Thornton, Amy Bramble, Ed Rose, Catherine Waddams, Tracey Drake.

There are deprived communities across our city and communities. Many are not changing, they feel forgotten and experience health and social inequalities. There are generational issues which are extremely difficult to fix. The short-term funding often made available for projects does not work.

We have very poor statistics for oral health, particularly in young children, so how do we work together to tackle those? That might be through [UEA](#) pushing for a Dental School and working alongside mobile food hubs and libraries which take those services into communities.

Likewise, how do we increase accessibility for opportunities like careers fairs and how we get those available to everyone? Employers can be part of this too in showcasing careers and skills to young people by taking this directly into their schools and communities. Junior and primary schools are key hubs for those in their communities who really need them, for highlighting education pathways and aspiration and they have great ideas for how to create interventions which can work – but they need to be funded to work over generations and not short term. Inclusivity for people with disabilities is also often lacking when people are aiming to get into work.

This looks like opportunities which benefit everyone, rather than as a trade-off where some benefit more than others. Social equality can be good for everyone – learning from others and from different experiences benefits all.

We can do this through better and more formal collaboration – a single direction and the same destination. It will help to push for collaborative funding bids. There are already lots of networks – often far too many – so how can this be streamlined and make sure that relationships go beyond individuals and become longer term?

How do we make sure our MPs advocate better for what we need? There is a misunderstanding of Norfolk being very affluent and making sure funding gets to the places where it can really make a change. People are really shocked by the true levels of deprivation across our region. There's every chance that our region will continue to be forgotten so we need to shout louder about the changes which we believe we can make.

OPPORTUNITIES

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What should Norfolk be famous for?

Topic Proposer: David Powles
Discussion Host: Prof Samuel Fountain
Discussion Participants: Neil Hall, Ruth Pearson, David Powles.

Norfolk is a global county in close proximity to European Cities and with rapid travel links to Amsterdam. The county should be famous for being innovative, world leading for bioscience, the quality and sustainability of food, being healthy and green with a good quality of life. We should be recognised in taking a leading role in renewal energy as Norfolk has the highest activity of solar energy production.

This recognition builds upon our heritage of environmental tourism including the 'BBC' (broads, brecks, coast) and as a central location for sustainable food and drink production through national recognition as a centre for agriculture and innovation

of crops, including next generation crops benefitting national and international communities in the face of growing populations and climate change.

We should be recognised as a welcoming county. Welcoming people and investment to underpin and grow our recognition, investing in grass roots jobs and highly skilled/technical jobs. We should be recognised through our Universities and Colleges for training the next generation of highly skilled people. We should be known as a county that invests in infrastructure to fully integrate rural, urban and suburban areas so that all have opportunity and can contribute.



How do we support ambition and social mobility in Norfolk's Young People and inspire the next generation to stay in Norfolk to help Norfolk thrive?

Topic Proposer: Nova Fairbank

Discussion Host: Anna Douglas

Discussion Participants: Michael Newey, Becky Price, Ed Rose, Patrick Peal, Chris Atkin, Robin Price, Bhargav Trivedi, Nova Fairbank.

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Ambition and social mobility walk hand-in-hand. Norfolk punches above its weight for partnership, collaboration and diversity but we don't sell Norfolk as inspirational for young people. How do we change perception of place to inspire the next generation to stay? There are many reasons for this including, issues such as rural communities, low-income families, poor transport links to support social mobility.

Do young people know what Norfolk is great for career or industry-wise? One participant discussed being encouraged to follow 'shoals of fishes' (centres for industry), i.e. Birmingham motor trade. In Norfolk, no dominating sector to showcase. Norfolk & Suffolk Unlimited has highlighted many successes but covered all sectors, rather than identify 1-2 leading industries. There isn't a job for a life anymore, people have portfolio careers, and that's not necessarily a bad thing.

What do young people from areas of deprivation want from the place they live? How do you create role models to fuel ambition and aspiration? Promoting businesses into schools is key in skills development. But, both businesses and schools need bandwidth for activity.

How might we facilitate change? One way could be for businesses to buy into promoting their opportunities and for Norfolk to develop an offer and communicate this using the right language to young people, parents, teachers. Could there be a Norfolk-wide initiative or commitment that businesses sign up to; a requirement for all businesses to participate? Should there be a government regulatory requirement for schools and business engagement?

Anglian Water invested in the College of West Anglia, guaranteeing apprenticeships to grow Norfolk-based talent to address skills shortages. Can we encourage

other organisations to invest in this type of initiative? Do we need to evaluate current use of Apprenticeship Levy to be used fairly across Norfolk for maximum benefit?

Do we need to provide schools with a new narrative on how to engage with businesses and a range of opportunities beyond school, not just about academic attainment or HE. Parents too, they may not realise there are other options to A-Levels e.g. apprenticeships, vocational, creative courses. Messaging needs to be clearer so we don't lose young people and stifle ambition because they don't think there are opportunities available for them.

Lack of 'careers nurturing'. What is a child's aptitude and passion? How do you encourage and support them to follow this path or identify careers that embraces a particular interest/skills/natural ability? How do we raise aspirations and inspire, including families where there have been few role models. It's not just about passing exams. One size doesn't fit all. Should a business recruitment ambition be to recruit for attitude, not aptitude.

Regarding diversity and inclusivity, businesses may need support to promote opportunities for neurodiverse young people, those leaving prison or the military. HE/FE can play a part; City College Norwich is supporting those with mental health issues, working as a broker for students into business.

Norfolk Chambers surveyed employers; biggest skills gap identified as 'soft skills'. Could schools or colleges better support soft skills development? (Since the 1980's, businesses have said that soft skills is an issue!) Maybe young people just need to get the experience and experiential learning. Some already do but could businesses bring the experience of work into schools?

How do we train children in roles to protect and develop our heritage?

Topic Proposer: Stuart Cotton

Discussion Host: Sarah Walker

Discussion Participants: Beth Sowersby, Will Seeley, Liam Robinson, Karrina Benning, Stuart Cotton.

'Norfolk, a county of stories. Digital narratives that teach heritage, narratives that teach science.'

The whole of the East Anglian region has thousands of years' worth of history and nothing in Norfolk is just 'English'. Lots of societies have built our Norfolk culture and will continue to inform our story. We are often described as a hidden region, yet the county has a rich and interesting DNA with an incredible mash up of heritage and a wealth of storytelling and folklore that is passed down between generations. However, what of the heritage of now and the legacy that we are creating?

If we can expose our children and young people to our heritage and create a culture for passion in their locality, we can build this into our infrastructure and we can develop and establish pathways into supporting and preserving our recent history through training, education, the digital industries and the commodity of tourism. We can join through our Civic Partnerships and involve many commercial and educational organisations in the process.

TOURISM

Share our stories and narratives within our tourist offerings, create interactive exhibits that increase the 'dwell time' – where we lose track of time within our museums/attractions by interacting with exhibits.

Work with the heritage providers to create access for all, which could provide those from deprived backgrounds the ability to benefit by having non-paying exhibits, as well as areas of 'value added access' which can be covered by fee paying tickets / annual subscriptions. Each person may not get to the epicentre of the exhibit, but all will be able to

get a lot of value from it. Adjust opening times to accommodate, such as at the end of the day it could be access all areas.

EDUCATION & DIGITAL INDUSTRIES

Develop teacher and pupil learning materials, based upon our local culture and stories, for different key stages in the curriculum and map it to the national curriculum learning objectives. Develop (locally) sustainable, digital resources for all schools and education providers to use as part of a circular education pathway, a process that can be delivered time and time again.

Broaden this into a digital badge system each skill building on the previous (such as the scouts and guides do). Grow from the age of 7 building the different digital skills/creative arts/film making badges, until the age of 16. When you've developed all of these you can then look at what you want to do in either Higher Education, straight into work or an apprenticeship. Locally trained and developed skills will remain within the region creating a need/employment loop.

FUTURE AND FUNDING

We need to think differently about how we engage with the heritage of tomorrow. There needs to be an intelligence programme where all stakeholders oversee communications with the big employers and engage our children. Norfolk is at the forefront of the energy industry and the development of offshore wind farms with 25% of UK wind energy being produced off our coast. We need a way of selling this story, this pathway and making it accessible to all learning the stories and the developing the skills to work in

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this global industry. Every stakeholder in the Civic Partnership joins this together and makes it sustainable.

A heritage operator could help with this, and councils and pension funds are looking for impact metrics to invest in. If a measure could be developed

to capture this impact, then we can tailor our approach to secure funding for linking commerce into training. It is worth doing extra interventions and finding the extra money so that this part of a community process.



Addressing the productivity gap through reducing health inequalities and improving access to childcare

Topic Proposer: Julie Schofield

Discussion Host: Vivien Easson

Discussion Participants: Julie Schofield, Chris Starkie, Ellen Tilney, Katy Rutherford, Phil Steele, Sally Howes.

Many regions of the UK would like to see improvements in productivity, but these will only come about if we address some of the root causes of the productivity gap. There is a significant negative impact on productivity from health inequalities, for example from malnutrition including under-nourishment, obesity and micronutrient deficiencies, or from unaddressed dental issues. Health problems can directly prevent individuals being able to work, or to work more effectively, or they can have an indirect impact when they affect carers.

Potential solutions include public health programmes directed at areas of most need, including Nourishing Norfolk which currently has 26 food hubs and is often a gateway to other services because of the trust that is built up with those who use it. Steps are being taken to make West Norfolk a 'Marmot Place', that is a place which first recognises that health and health inequalities are mostly shaped by the social determinants of health, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and then takes action to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

The University of East Anglia and wider Norwich Research Park undertake some of the highest quality research into nutrition anywhere in the country. The university has also obtained cross-party support from the region's MPs to set up a dental school and is seeking further UK Government support to make this a reality, with support also being offered from Norfolk County Council in recognition of the parlous state of

affairs for NHS dentistry across the county: Norfolk is one of the worst dental deserts in the country. Positive impacts here are likely to be strengthened by effective reform of the national dental funding model.

Other possible solutions involve Government-funded programmes similar to the DWP-funded Working Well Norfolk, providing mentoring support for individuals. A social enterprise vehicle is also being explored at the University of East Anglia to support students on sport or health degree courses being placed with community groups, which could include Nourishing Norfolk hubs, for placement periods of 20-50 hours per year per student, and upwards of 10,000 hours per year in total. These individuals could promote the development of healthy behaviours and habits in exercise or diet.

Another barrier to productivity is the cost of childcare, combined with the difficulties of recruiting and retaining skilled nursery staff, reducing both demand and supply of nursery places. There are challenges here around motivation and rates of pay, as there are across the health and social care and education sectors, which need to be addressed.

Increasing upskilling through education and apprenticeships needs to be combined with other mechanisms to improve productivity across Norfolk. Private investment is essential. We need to attract more multinational and national firms and investment to the region to provide jobs that offer higher reward and broader employability opportunities, working alongside local companies to deliver a more active and productive workforce ecosystem.

Topic Proposer: Amy Bramble

Discussion Host: Justine Mann

Discussion Participants: Kaavous Clayton, Amy Bramble

'Norfolk should position itself as a "Collaborative County" rather than "Nelson's County".'

Norfolk has unique geography. It is not as fast paced as elsewhere but this makes it more reflective and able to 'do different', acting as an exemplar for the UK as a whole.

Funders want to provide funding to community groups but community groups are not always positioned to accept funding and enact change. We can't change the way funding is provided but can we change the way we collaborate to take advantage of opportunities and maximise investment.

The Transition Network approach to collaboration encourages a movement for community led change.

UEA could act as the anchor organisation within that methodology.

For example, groups of farmers in Norfolk recently came together to discuss deer management. The conversation was transformative in terms of knowledge sharing but follow up collective action is harder without support, facilitation and co-ordination.

With central government backing, UEA could act civically as an anchor organisation providing co-ordination and infrastructure for seed funded community projects across business, arts, technology and education. We could develop case studies and strong visualisation as exemplars to encourage community champions to apply for funds and resources to help bring about community led change.

Topic Proposer: Kay Mason Billig

Discussion Host: Hannah Jackson

Discussion Participants: Kay Mason Bilig, Bevin Carey, Jackie Thornton, James Bemment, Martin Blackwell, Hannah Jackson.

Those who live in the county recognise that Norfolk has a lot to offer, especially with respect to the quality of life but we are not good at promoting that and there are also a number of challenges to overcome to make the county an even better place to live and work.

In order to enable more of the technology industry to come to the county we need to be in a position to create more of our own energy and water for our own use and provide assurances on the certainty of that to any future investors. Examples of this could include capitalising on the potential for Norwich to become an urban solar farm and farms collaborating to create collective water reservoirs.

There is a recognition that there is a shortage of affordable housing for young people to enable them to move to the county for employment, and transport links in rural areas need to be improved to link communities outside of Norwich and the other large towns.

To support this serious consideration should be given to:

- building affordable and allocated housing around new industrial areas for the workforce.
- explore more opportunities for 'living over the shop' to bring people closer to where they work.
- ensuring the success of the £100m bus improvement plan by extending it to rural communities.
- looking for opportunities to expand rail services to ease the pressure from Norwich rail station.
- the development of collective/mobility hubs to bring services together in one place in rural towns and villages, including utilising existing libraries to provide this service.

In order to promote what is on offer in Norfolk and bring people to live and work in the county there needs to be a coordinated communication plan that is understood by, and shared with all organisations and businesses to promote the county.



What can Norfolk do that no-one else can do and how do we demonstrate this to Government?

Topic Proposer: Mike Rigby

Discussion Host: Alex Bratt

Discussion Participants: Jon Davenport, Tracey Drake, Saul Humphrey, Andrew Jamieson, Matt Tracey, Suresh Weerasinghe, Mike Rigby.

Participants discussed what Norfolk can do that no-one else can. This is an important topic because it was felt we need a strapline to move the dial and get the Government to invest in this county.

The offshore renewables industry is key to this. It will have a great economic impact and we need to make it an aspirational industry to attract talent and drive job creation and to show growth to government around net zero. Furthermore, agriculture, wind energy and tourism should be seen as our key economic drivers. Regenerative agriculture is important, but we need to be able to produce and retain energy – Fields can be used for two purposes – for agriculture and for solar power.

Devolution presents a massive opportunity to think strategically and inter-generationally. We need to set our own narrative over the next 30 years and present our own solutions – this vision should be self-reliant and not tied to funding. We should use the devolution settlement and this plan to make us attractive to private sector investment. We also need to make our own proposals around home-building and ensure it is tied to existing infrastructure.

Food is another unique asset – this county contains the complete chain from innovation through to consumption. Where Norfolk and Norwich are truly unique is in the concentration and co-location (relatively speaking) of a wide range of food- and agriculture-related bodies that are not found elsewhere. For example, from the studies undertaken at the [John Innes Centre](#) and [Sainsbury Laboratory](#) into plant science and soil, to the [Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association](#) and [Easton College](#), and to the [Quadram Institute's](#) examination of the way food impacts upon our bodies. There are also food industry titans such as [Pasta Foods](#) and [Condimentum](#), making world famous brands, and small, innovative producers being represented by the [Tastebuds Collective](#). Low-cost regulatory change in food production would bring investment.

Creative sector growth is also key. We are well positioned geographically in order to grow our film industry. We have the local talent and a wealth of shooting locations, but don't have a fund to incentivise this unlike other parts of the UK. Cross regional collaboration in this sector is important.

How to create a fertile environment for SMEs + How can we influence SMEs for new technologies and behaviour change?

Topic Proposer: Anthony Hudson and Roberta Willner

Discussion Host: Diego Durantini

Discussion Participants: Anthony Hudson, Roberta Willner, Charlotte Crawley, Jonathan Jones, Michael Gurney.

Participants talked about SMEs in the region needing to be connected with expertise to support scaling up, and the creation of new SMEs. Norfolk County Council is offering the “Growth Hub” to give the kind of expertise in demand (such as technical competence and business knowledge) as free support.

Suggestions and questions arose around the possibility to employ or adapt the Stanford model for research and university interaction with SMEs? Is there enough entrepreneurship, business knowledge and ambition in the county? If not, how does Norfolk attract

these soft skills? SME-tailored “MBA” or start-up-tailored “MBA” to support and foster those skills; there is a potential for funding opportunities to support such programs. At local events, or drop-in sessions, there could be a regular Q&A with people/entrepreneurs with experience to support SMEs growth.

We have a great asset in the [Norwich Research Park](#), which is crucial to attract SMEs.

On a smaller scale, how can Norfolk support family businesses with potential to scale to become international business?



Topic Proposer: Heather Jermy

Discussion Host: Hayley Mace

Discussion Participants: Rosie Littlehales, Paula Sanchez, Kristopher Harper Allison, Niki Braithwaite, Heather Jermy

Norfolk's challenge is that much of our tourism is seasonal. There are huge opportunities to bring local people into local attractions out of peak season which makes the opportunities more sustainable and supported.

The value of tourism to the county is huge – billions of pounds – so it should have a lot more support than it does. If there is more investment, then organisations can grow and employ more people and give more back.

There needs to be the infrastructure to support the push for sustainability and to attract local people. Much of that comes to transport. Public transport often does not work in tandem with where people want to go for days out. This would support local rural communities as well as the attractions. Trials tend to be very short lived and don't really give the opportunity to test the appeal of public transport. Funding is project-focused, rather than longer term. Funding is often based on KPIs like overnight stays (hotels or Air BnBs) but that's not necessarily encouraging local

tourism so is quite an outdated measurement.

Within education, there are elements where children could learn 'outside the classroom' from the tourism, heritage and culture which we have to offer in our county. But that needs funding and a strategy where children aren't given a 'black mark' for not being in the classroom. This can pose challenges around accessibility – how can we make sure attractions have the facilities needed to welcome everyone?

Arts Council and other funding often goes into 'hotspot' areas but that tends to attract people from outside the area. While that can be positive, it doesn't necessarily support or appeal to people in the local community or bring them a positive financial legacy.

Tourism jobs in areas like Great Yarmouth are usually low paid, seasonal jobs but there are opportunities to build a local economy which can change that and support those local communities. The Gloucester shipwreck museum or exhibition could be something which has the potential to develop and sustainable, year-round attraction for the region. The lack of

local media to advertise local opportunities and attractions is a challenge.



Topic Proposer: Julia Devonshire

Discussion Host: Paul Tabern

Discussion Participants: Kathryn Coventry, Andrea Kelly, Julian Blow, Esme Yuill, Julia Devonshire

The proposal of this question stems from existing work in a charity environment within Great Yarmouth. There is a real need to promote opportunities for leadership, but a lack of understanding or processes to do so, is limiting. This is particularly considering the lack of examples, evidence, and knowledge of people who have done so from the more deprived areas of Norfolk.

Existing leadership at civic level does not feel diverse and does not reflect the views and experiences of young people. There is a lack of legacy planning, and a difficulty in understanding the different routes into leadership positions, and the benefits of becoming a leader, for upcoming generations. How do we change this and put in place measures to ensure young people with aspirations can access pathways to future leadership roles and play a critical role in the future strategic needs of the county and beyond?

There is a lack of inspiration, and it is increasingly difficult for young people to develop a sense of civic ownership. Expediated by an increase in the culture of 'accessibility via technology' – how can we harness the power of this to embed a sense of place, purpose and power? In a digital landscape where you've never owned anything, how can you have agency to take ownership of civic pride if your world and environment may feel transient and overly accessible – e.g technology means we are truly connected throughout the world, available at all times and so on.

Leadership roles feel impenetrable at youth levels even more so if you are from deprived areas of the region. There are often no mentors or trailblazers to look up to. Could the answer be in sustainability areas, or environment angles where youth policy is more welcomed or perceived to be more valid?

How does UEA develop leadership? We have courses for leaders, but these are invariably available for industrial leaders or those in society that can afford education. Knowledge is less important than it was due to information that is easily accessed, so how can we promote leadership for those that can think differently, or can link things together, those that can act as 'leaders' in their field or on causes of importance. Would this enable more diverse leadership aspiration?

Often we are encouraged to join groups due to place, for example a university society. But when that time has finished there is not continuity. So, is there an opportunity to develop 'civic' societies or groups that harness roles that can shift and pivot to reflect peoples' journeys, there is investment in an ethos there as opposed to a setting or timeframe.

Consistency is key! We need to build up legacy – you can't be what you can't see! Ownership is also critical, taking ownership of your social role from an early age and seeing how you can affect things. Becoming experts by experience.



INVESTMENT

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How do we make sure marginalised communities have a voice and are not left behind?

Topic Proposer: Ellen Tilney

Discussion Host: Professor Samuel Fountain

Discussion Participants: Ruth Pearson, Katy Rutherford, Ellen Tilney.

Marginalised communities within our county may include the elderly, those whose first language is not English, those in low skilled or low income jobs, those with long-term health conditions including mental health problems, those who face social housing pressures, members of rural communities, and victims of domestic abuse. Marginalised communities should have a voice and be supported to contribute professionally and economically for the benefit of themselves, their families and the county.

Appropriate training, resource and support should be given to teachers and other agents of change to support them dealing with social and societal issues, and that they have appropriate information for signposting.

We have a growing population of people who are not economically active. There is a greater need for co-production and innovation in this area to best understand the needs or changes required to allow individuals to contribute. There is a need for a Women's enterprise and employment strategy in

the county, including a support for childcare and elderly care. Greater investment in technology and education is required to provide more support for "care navigation", looking to other countries such as Germany's guardian system. It should be recognised that access to healthcare is increasingly technology driven and this can introduce barriers to the elderly and people with disabilities. There needs to be more innovation in this area to understand barriers.

A key part of this is engaging with communities to understand what works best. Communities should have trusted hubs for information and support around healthcare, employment, training opportunities and how to access and use IT equipment, supporting the transition of all to the digital age. Transport links, particularly in rural areas, are a major concern, and a new rural area transport strategy is required to unlock potential and include marginalised communities. Better access and strategy for adult education in our region.

Connections to Europe and beyond – reinstating ferries from Great Yarmouth to Europe

Topic Proposer: Kaavons Clayton

Discussion Host: Hayley Mace

Discussion Participants: Charlotte Crawley, Julia Devonshire, Niki Braithwaite, Matt Tracey, Kaavons Clayton.

Building road connections takes huge amounts of energy but can we improve connections in greener ways by using boats and ferries?

Europe is on our doorstep and there have been links with the Netherlands for centuries. It feels like it has potential for tourism and trade. Hundreds of miles of our county's border is sea but yet we do not maximise it for travel or transport.

The Great Yarmouth outer harbour and third river crossing have opened up that port area and there are many plans to dual the A47 which would also open that connection from wider outside our region. It could

bring additional investment and visitors into Great Yarmouth.

Businesses and travellers want safe, consistent journeys – whatever form that takes. The A47 dualling aims to deliver roads which are fit for purpose and safer. Ryanair have opened new lines from Norwich Airport and that has proved that there is public demand for travel from the region.

Integrated transport (so people can walk or cycle to the station and then take a bike with them to continue their journey) is fundamental. But that also requires trains with capacity to hold cycles.



What infrastructure do we need to enable the private sector to thrive?

Topic Proposer: Andrew Jamieson

Discussion Host: Alex Bratt

Discussion Participants: Bevin Carey, Nova Fairbank, Michael Gurney, Saul Humpreys, Patrick Peal, Roberta Willmer, Andrew Jamieson.

How can we enable entrepreneurs to thrive? What is our long-term strategy? Funding has often been short-termist but devolution should bring certainty. We need a multi-generational perspective, the public sector should enable the private sector and give businesses the certainty to grow. Employers and developers need certainty around planning – the system has been broken. They also need a skilled workforce.

One priority should be to extend the reach of Norwich Research Park and support this through infrastructure, including housing. Any such expansion should be about bringing in new businesses not moving existing ones. We could also collaborate more with Cambridge – they have space limitations and we are well linked through the A11 and can deliver potentially at a cheaper rate. Other suggestions

include supporting small businesses to work together to deliver larger projects (e.g. NCIPs) – support could be more visible, like at Mildenhall.

Small infrastructure changes could have bigger impacts (e.g. widening the narrow bridge at Wroxham, the Heart of the Broads) could make big differences to our ability to compete. Transport infrastructure is key – at the moment our skills are spread over a broad area. Improved public transport would also help in this area. We should look at pinch-points and also open up freight routes through rail. Three key things to consider in this space are: Power (more solar); Water (for business); Local planning efficiencies. We need a single investment fund to capitalise on our capacity for innovation.



Topic Proposer: Andrea Kelly

Discussion Host: Vivien Easson

Discussion Participants: Andrea Kelly, Ellen Tilney, Robin Price

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Land management is complex, and land management funding arrangements are often even more so. Understanding what funding streams are available and how to successfully access them can be time-consuming and prohibitively complicated, with considerable compliance and audit requirements to follow once funding is obtained. Where farmers are keen to diversify and to strike a good balance between food, water and environmental security, they have to spend long additional hours navigating these administrative waters. Yet the complexity is there in order to allow flexibility, since land quality and type varies, and what works in one place won't work in another.

Potential ways to support farmers involve rolling out further public benefit mapping, following examples such as South Downs chalk fissure mapping, or the Norfolk Water Fund that evaluates locations, soil type and topography to show good places to put sustainable rural drainage systems. The farmer may already know from long experience where would work best, but this kind of external evidence could provide reassurance to the funder and speed up applications and decision-making. It would also help handle some of the current barriers of managing governance at scale.

Clarifying what opportunities are viable for private investment would help, linked to appropriate transparency and legal structures, because there is no shortage of funding which can be released from further up the supply chain. Consumers are keen to know that their purchases are beneficial to or do not

further damage the natural environment, but the regulatory burden of proving this often needs to go right back to the farmer. Anglian Water are working to develop farm clusters which can help build trust and share the regulatory burden in given areas, for example around flood risk.

Local Nature Recovery strategies – complex and done at speed – often end up being a vehicle for general biodiversity net gain with the specific details hard to make work at the local level. However, quick action may still be preferable to extensive analysis, and we suggest adopting a growth mindset, failing fast, welcoming negative results, listening to experienced elders from across the farming and business communities, encouraging imaginative solutions, and learning from small-scale tests before rolling out more broadly. The Holkham Estate is a good exemplar, among many others across Norfolk.

Skilled experts are required who can bridge theory and practice – water technicians as well as water security economists, and farm advisors as well as agri-food entrepreneurs. Norfolk has excellent credentials here and already has a reputation for being one of the most progressive parts of the country for managing land in harmony with nature. With long-term investment in farm diversification, supporting agricultural innovation, climate adaptations and sustainable tourism, we will be able to build on this strong foundation and become the exemplar region for nature recovery and sustainable farming.

Topic Proposer: Dr Jonathan Jones

Discussion Host: Beth Sowersby

Discussion Participants: Dr Jonathan Jones, Prof Julian Blow

The discussion started by introducing the idea that UEA should look more closely at how they work with John Innes and what we offer jointly. More collaboration around events and guest lectures was discussed and more promotion of the relationship between institutions. The role of social sciences in plant science, was discussed, and how it could change public attitudes to some of the work being done and

lead to better understanding. The proposer wasn't sure there was mileage in his question but the main point he wanted to address was that we need to ensure that if bids go in and then costs rise, it's accepted that those projects might need more funding to be able to deliver. Transport links in the region were briefly discussed and how this impacts on ability to be socially mobile.

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Topic Proposer: Felicity Perry

Discussion Host: Justine Mann

Discussion Participants: Saskia Hervey, Mike Rigby, Chris Atkin, Felicity Perry

INFLUENCING THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

UEA and NRP need to work with our local government partners to illustrate the tremendous value of our research and research impact to address regional challenges. Norfolk does 'quirky' and 'creative' collaboration very well and this is a message to hold close to inform our own thinking and our influencing of government.

Our county's citizens are now represented by all the political parties across our constituencies. This is an ideal testing ground for new ideas, underpinned by our world leading research.

We need to move away from the 'letter of support' partnership mentality towards working in a genuinely collaborative way to influence and drive regional strategy and national policy decisions about Norfolk. Together, we can influence central government more powerfully, leverage greater investment and improve Norfolk people's lives and the lives of others in the UK.

THE FUTURE OF THE FOOD ECONOMY AND HEALTH PRESCRIBING

There are opportunities for place-based impact funding if we work together to map regional issues to the global research work underway at NRP/UEA/ NNUH. Norfolk is a leader in this area and we need central government to recognise that and provide us with investor zone status. A good example of our prowess is in the agriculture and food health area (FOOD Cluster). There is a dietary solution to health

prescribing – enriching foods with additional nutrients that solve or manage health conditions. We now need businesses to invest to get our research ideas out to consumers. Can a collaborative effort between local government, UEA and NRP, plus our LEPs encourage commercial investment and can central government offer any investment funding to incentivise this.

WORLD APPLICATION OF NORFOLK / NORTH SEA WIND ENERGY

AI and data can improve productivity in off shore engineering (our coastline can illustrate how to make equipment that can handle drilling in eroding coastal areas) and wind farm technology. UEA can work with civic and professional bodies locally to encourage projects that can become national /world leading exemplars.

COMMERCE

We need to identify global companies that have not yet invested in the UK and encourage them to come to Norfolk and even move their UK headquarters to our region. We need to court the large energy companies and promote our region and coastline. The large number of SMEs and the ecosystem they create in Norfolk is a strength. There is a risk of dilution in devolution. We could be an anchor institution, working with local government to seed fund projects in a dozen small companies for quick wins that show Norfolk as a catalyst for change.

Topic Proposer: Martin Blackwell

Discussion Host: Sarah Walker

Discussion Participants: Catherine Waddham, Heather Jermy, Kathryn Coventry, Martin Blackwell

'Norwich Solar System' is the working title of this current project led by Norwich BID with the city poised to become the largest urban solar farm in the UK. Rising energy costs and the desire by local business leaders to move to lower cost sustainable renewable energy has led to Norwich being the first UK city to look at installing its own solar energy grid.

As available land in and around Norwich to support the growth of renewable energy is limited, the roof tops of the existing structures will slowly provide the space required. Norwich has been sectioned into 8 business districts with drones using global imaging software to capture and analyse commercial rooftops across the city to provide the scale of opportunity that this project can deliver on.

40% of the cost of electricity production is incurred during the transmission, that is getting it from where it is generated to where it is used. If electricity is generated on site, then up to 40% of the current market rate electricity cost can be saved providing a huge competitive opportunity for any commercial business within the city. Norwich BID, who represent large and small businesses locally, have partnered with a commercial provider to install and deliver the solar panels to buildings and run the network. It is anticipated that the first solar panels will be installed on city rooftops next year.

Challenges that arose as part of the feasibility and pilot include:

- The local planning system as many of the local commercial buildings are listed.
- There are potential issues with glare for both residents and air traffic.
- Concerns with how visible the panels will be.

A barrier to the success of this project will be landlords engaging and allowing panels to be installed on their buildings. Many large landlords such as the Norwich Historic Churches Trust and some commercial shops are fully on board with this project. With conversations ongoing and a waiting list to join the pilot.

The power grid will work on a block chain network with business buying into the system at the set cost, thus allowing all business that are part of this network to benefit even where they are in a building that does not generate its own power. It will be a fully 'peer to peer' energy sharing platform.

The third and final phase of this project, funding, is due to commence with an announcement in the Autumn. Anyone will be able to invest in this network, and it may be possible to work towards instalments to pay for the equipment. It is anticipated that the first solar panels will be installed on city rooftops next year.

Norwich BID is at the heart of changing perceptions to thrive and deliver the need to do things differently.

Bringing foreign investment and a digital technology innovation hub to the county

Topic Proposer: Gerard Parr

Discussion Host: Hannah Jackson

Discussion Participants: Chris Starkie, Julie Schofield, Kay Mason Billig, Naresh Pandit, Suresh Weerasinghe, Stuart Cotton, Gerard Parr.

Norwich/Norfolk has the potential to become a High Potential Opportunity Area because of the talent, world leading research and innovation, and facilities but we need to raise awareness of that, as well as better harnessing the county's research capabilities and further encouraging entrepreneurship.

We should take a more coordinated approach across the county between the universities, NRP, business and Norfolk County Council to more aggressively approach overseas companies and governments, through inward investment missions, to showcase what the county has to offer and why they should invest in it. Once the big players come to the county then this will create further opportunities for start-ups and show Norfolk as a serious proposition for doing business.

All opportunities for collaboration should be optimised, particularly with our close competitors, in Cambridge and London. We should demonstrate the purchasing power parity and quality of life of working in the county of Norfolk, compared to Cambridge or London, in order to entice talent to move here to work.

We should look at opportunities to use our digital talent to become a regional demonstrator of exemplars of what is working, and what isn't working, in the digital space and become trusted brokers to support businesses and entrepreneurs.

How do we control the intelligence?

Topic Proposer: Stuart Cotton

Discussion Host: Samuel Fountain

Discussion Participants: Gerard Parr, David Powles, Phil Steele, Stuart Cotton.

To realise Norfolk's potential there is an urgent need for a regional intelligence unit that stores and shares intelligence with key stakeholders of the public and private sectors in our region. This intelligence sharing is essential to ensure investment in infrastructure can be realised and built upon. The intelligence should be freely available to key regional stakeholders and provide the digital and analytical skills to best interrogate and understand the intelligence.

This way of working will allow understanding of how every stakeholder, including minority groups, fits within our county. Understanding successes and current areas of limitation that require investment. This will facilitate investors to make place-based impactful investments to maintain, grow and develop our regional contribution to the UK and our success as a county. The intelligence should ensure nobody is left behind and that we also understand how to reach communities that are being negatively impacted by decisions and investment. A key starting point is to understand a baseline and current conditions for progress.

National and regional measures of impacts and baselines need to be defined and standardised so that a shared language can be used between stakeholders. The Norfolk Office of Data and Analytics (NODA) can play a key role in developing and implementing a regional intelligence unit, defining measures and standards, understanding baseline metric and providing support for digital and analytical skills to key stakeholders.

What do we do with the intelligence? We should use AI technology to help analyse and understand large data sets and the impacts of place-based investments would make. It should identify what Norfolk needs to thrive. It should allow us to horizon scan and to understand competition and opportunities in neighbouring counties. It should allow creation of a better brand and vision for Norfolk. There should be constant QA/QC of the intelligence, measures and methods of analysis based upon impacts.

Topic Proposer: Mark Nicholas

Discussion Host: Diego Durantini

Discussion Participants: James Bemment, Heather Jermy, Christopher Harper, Paula Sanchez, Will Sealey, Mark Nicholas.

Allocation of key resources would include: money, time, people, skills, ideas, infrastructure and facilities fit for purpose, as well as natural resources. Examples of successful projects were discussed, where resources were used effectively, leading to the creation of a sense of community, where people took more care of each other.

The group also discussed combining county councils' resources to make them more effective instead of siloing them. Also, the ideal use of community funds was discussed, using the example of the high-voltage lines landing from the wind farms offshore that lead through Norfolk's coastal communities. Collecting the best and most effective

use of these funds and creating case studies to support other communities was suggested. The idea was also put forward that "Funding should not be project-based".

The effective allocation of resources will require a central body to oversee the prioritisation of needs and prevent the siloing of ideas and inefficient splitting of resource. A central body must then enable coherent and joined up policy development which leads to effective resource allocation. Point 29 – how do we control intelligence – should be a critical function to help enable effective resource allocation. The key point is that there needs to be order, prioritisation and a joined up and informed picture of needs.

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UEA Civic Forum





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CALL TO ACTION

The evidence in this report lays bare the key needs of the county, and the opportunities that could be unlocked if those needs are met. It comes from convening key stakeholders who can help deliver on both. To those we offer the following exhortations:

Local government officials – be bold, confident and assertive about the needs of the region. The more we can present a unified front, in spite of local differences, party political or otherwise, the fewer obstacles will be in the way to achieving the ambitions set out in this report.

Local anchor institutions and regional businesses – use this document to frame and support your ongoing advocacy for the region. Pick and choose the recommendations that fit best for you in your sectors. Reach out to UEA or the County Council if you need more support in advancing these goals.

Regional MPs and their staff teams – you represent a strategically vital region for the UK. Our needs are the country's needs. Make sure your colleagues in Westminster know that. This report can help.

Ministers and mandarins – Norfolk has been historically underserved by Westminster governments, but you need this county to deliver on your wider agendas. A prosperous Norfolk ensures the country's supply of energy, food, and, is the first line of defence. Work with us, our door is open.



Mark Nicholas, Deputy Lieutenant, Norfolk Lieutenancy
Martin Blackwell, Head of Development, Norwich Business Improvement District
Matt Tracey, Group Manager – Sustainability, Infrastructure & Development, Norfolk County Council
Michael Gurney, Vice Lord-Lieutenant, Norfolk Lieutenancy
Michael Newey, Chief Executive, Broadland Housing Group
Mike Rigby, Chief Executive, Eastern Promise
Naresh Pandit, Professor, UPEN Business Lead, Norwich Business School
Neil Hall, Director, The Earlham Institute
Nicola Hancock, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Innovation, UEA
Niki Braithwaite, Arts Development Manager, Norfolk County Council
Nova Fairbank, Chief Executive, Norfolk Chambers of Commerce
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