

POLICY NEWSLETTER

The latest updates from Suffolk Chamber of Commerce



TRANSPORTEAST

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE REGIONS TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Transport East, the regional transport body for Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex has published an ambitious transport strategy for the region including a number of schemes the organisation hopes can be delivered.

Through the strategy, Transport East aim to overcome some of the transport challenges the region experiences, while also delivering a fit for purpose, high quality, inclusive and sustainable transport network that will be able to accommodate future growth. Transport East began developing this last year with detailed technical work and engagement across the region, and are keen to receive formal feedback to make sure their plans work for the region.

The plan is set to feature 55 projects, identifying improvements needed to roads, rail lines, ports and airports across the East. This will include projects already under construction like the Lowestoft Gull Wing bridge, schemes being developed such as the A14 Copdock developments and Great Eastern Main Line upgrades, and new ideas yet to be assessed fully.

The Transport East regional transport strategy - which covers Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, Southend and Thurrock - will look as far as 2050.

Public consultation begins on Thursday, December 2, and will run for eight weeks, centred around four priority areas - achieving net zero carbon, connecting towns and cities, energising rural and coastal communities and unlocking international gateways.

To view the strategy and to have your say on the plans visit www.transporteast.org.uk/public-consultation

OCTOBER'S BUDGET - RECAP

Full analysis available on our website

In October, the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak MP delivered his second full budget. In the backdrop of COVID19 and the reopening of the economy, the Chancellor gave a rather optimistic view that "employment is up, investment is growing and wages are increasing", announcing that the economy was expected to grow by 6.5% compared to previous estimates of 4%.

During his speech, the Chancellor addressed inflation, expecting it to peak in 2022 at around 4% and that global issues such as supply-chains would take a while to recover.

However, this speech was not full of changes to tax, giveaways or promises for business which often make up most of the early guesses by pundits, instead, it was Business Rates that the Chancellor focussed on.

Following an extensive consultation with businesses and business groups over the last year, it was confirmed that for the time being, Business Rates are here to stay. The current policy raises approximately £25bn per year and, as a result, the fundamental reform of Business Rates that we hoped for has been replaced with minimal changes which we would describe as tinkering.

The key details are:

- Revaluations will now take place every three years starting from 2023
- Until 2035, plant and machinery used onsite for renewable energy will be exempt from rates altogether
- From 2023, every business will be able to make property improvements and for 12 months, pay no extra rates
- Next years planned multiplier will be cancelled
- 50% rates cut for 12 months for those in the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors

Since the Budget, it has also been confirmed that the much anticipated White Paper on Levelling Up will not be published until the new year.

[For more information about the Budget including a summary, and a list of policy wins by the Chamber network, click here.](#)

Updated COVID19 guidance

With news of the Omicron variant, businesses are being advised to make sure they follow the rules around Coronavirus where applicable.

As a reminder, as of Tuesday 30th November,

- All international arrivals must take a day two polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and self-isolate until they receive a negative result
- All contacts of suspected COVID-19 Omicron cases must self-isolate, regardless of their vaccination status. They will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace
- Face coverings will be made compulsory in shops and on public transport. All hospitality settings will be exempt

[The full guidance can be found here.](#)

[Further information on reopening, safely, operating, and possible financial support in Suffolk can be found here.](#)



Help to Grow - learn new skills, reach more customers and boost your profits

Business can still sign up to the new Help to Grow scheme to help owners of small and medium-sized businesses to take their business to the next level. There are two Government backed programmes designed to help businesses:

Help to Grow: Digital offers businesses free, impartial advice on how technology can boost business, delivered through a new online platform.

Help to Grow: Management offers senior business leaders management and leadership training, delivered by Business Schools across the UK.

Help to Grow is a free resource for any business owner looking to grow their business. [Further information is available here.](#)

Copdock Junction consultation closing soon!

National Highways (formerly Highways England) are currently consulting on two options to improve Copdock Junction (Junction 55) of the A14.

As part of the Roads Investment Strategy 3 pipeline, National Highways are looking into schemes which could be delivered in the period 2025-2030, such as Copdock Junction. Prior to selection, schemes needed to demonstrate a good value for money, economic growth and show that they have support from stakeholders.

With this junction suffering from congestion, slow journey times, poor reliability and a high prevalence of accidents, National Highways are looking for feedback on two options:

- Increase the capacity of the existing junction to help accommodate the future demand. This will be done by widening the circulatory carriageway and the provision of free flow left turn lanes at three of the four entry points.
- Decrease the volume of traffic at the existing junction by removing the A12 (South) to A14(East) (and vice versa) movements onto separate link roads. This option will see a new free flow two-way link road built.

[The consultation closes on the 9th December and further details can be found here.](#)



NET ZERO GRANTS AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES SOON

As part of a collective, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce alongside partners have been successful in securing funds to run a net zero grant programme for businesses, alongside consultant support, business resources and to run a number of events for local businesses.

Through the Government's Community Renewal Fund, which will be the precursor to the much anticipated Shared Prosperity Fund, partners were successful in bidding for a project which will help businesses move towards net zero, become more sustainable and support local economic growth.

The scheme is due to launch in the new year, and support and advice will be available via the New Anglia Growth Hub. Partners include Suffolk County Council, New Anglia LEP, University of Suffolk, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce.

To find out more, please visit the New Anglia Growth Hub website which can be found here.

Please note that the programme is not due to launch until the new year

In the meantime, if you are an SME wanting to decarbonise, Suffolk County Council can help through identifying opportunities to reduce emissions, reduce energy usage, improve efficiency, and develop new products or services + more. For further information, visit Eastern New Energy here.

Active travel for your business

Suffolk County Council have increased the resource available to businesses to support sustainable and active travel to and from the workplace and are keen to work with Chamber members to develop this and help them realise the benefits of a potentially healthier, happier, better off workforce.

As well as time and expertise, there are opportunities for match funding members' active travel projects (e.g. showers, bike lockers) and financial assistance to acquire electric cargo bikes which can carry up to 250kg for local deliveries. In addition to assisting members in developing plans that will increase the numbers of employees travelling to work via more sustainable or active means, SCC will also guide businesses to gain accreditation and recognition for their efforts. To find out more, email

thewaytogosuffolk@suffolk.gov.uk
or call Chris Grover 07388 623474
www.thewaytogosuffolk.org.uk

EU trading information and webinars

The Government has made available webinars and videos about trading with the EU for businesses who import and export. A full calendar of webinars for organisations that trade with the EU can be found on GOV.UK. Businesses can also use the Brexit Checker Tool, which will provide a personalised list of the most up to date actions that businesses need to take.