

10 December 2025 Suffolk Business Board Briefing Paper

Agenda Item: Suffolk Cluster Analysis and Feasibility Study Final Report

Purpose:

This item provides an update on the final outcomes of the Suffolk Cluster Analysis and Feasibility Study. It presents two deliverables: The Suffolk Cluster Development Plan and the Suffolk Cluster Intervention Cards.

Background:

The Suffolk Economic Strategy sets out a roadmap for delivering long-term sustainable growth across the county, positioning Suffolk as a national leader in powering, feeding and connecting the UK.

Recognising the value of strategic clusters as drivers of growth and innovation, Plexal and Tech East have undertaken a comprehensive cluster analysis and feasibility study. The first two phases of the work identified three strategic missions for Suffolk, which were presented at the October 2025 Suffolk Business Board. Through further stakeholder engagement, these were refined and developed further.

The three strategic missions are:

1. **Power Clean Growth:** Driving the UK's green transition, leveraging Suffolk's existing strengths in nuclear and offshore wind, alongside growing potential in hydrogen, bioenergy and solar.
2. **Sustain the Nation:** Leading a smart countryside revolution by applying clean and digital technologies to agri-food systems, enhancing food security, productivity and water resilience.
3. **Deliver Smart Logistics:** Making Suffolk the hub of sustainable trade through decarbonised freight corridors, digital logistics and stronger local value capture.

To deliver these missions, four priority clusters anchored on Suffolk's nationally significant strengths have been identified:

1. Advanced Connectivity Technology
2. Agri-Food and Drink
3. Clean Energy
4. Ports and Logistics

The work has culminated in two documents to guide the next phase of work. These documents are:

1. **Suffolk Cluster Development Plan:** Sets out Suffolk's framework for delivering mission-led growth. It outlines the opportunities within Suffolk's three strategic missions and explains how these can be achieved through cluster development.

2. **Suffolk Cluster Intervention Cards:** Presents a suite of targeted activities, informed by stakeholders and designed to support Suffolk's four priority clusters. This is intended to be a live, iterative document that serves as an important starting point for Suffolk's cluster development activities.

These two deliverables are the result of an in-depth technical analysis which, in raw form, can be made available on request.

Next steps:

The incoming Mayoral Combined County Authority and devolution present opportunities to unlock new funding and deepen collaboration with Norfolk, particularly around shared priorities and strengths. Suffolk also has a strong pipeline of projects already attracting investment and support.

We ask the Board to approve the Suffolk Cluster Development Plan and mobilise the following activities:

1. **Phase A:** Approve the use of an additional £80k funding (previously approved by Business Board as part of the overall Cluster cost envelope) to allow the Plexal to deliver the proposed next steps on behalf of the Business Board. This is a time-limited investment to establish governance, set up the team responsible for driving cluster growth, and build the foundations for cluster delivery.

Activities:

- **LIPF submission** - Collaborate with Connected Innovation to develop LIPF submission and align with the cluster development plan.
- **Convene private investment opportunity conversations** - For example, through partner roundtable. Support the Investment Prospectus creation for UKREIF.
- **Set up resources responsible for driving cluster growth** - Develop specification (e.g. roles, structure, skills) and identify quick wins from intervention cards.
- **Long-term plan for cluster development** - Work with Suffolk County Council and partners to agree detailed funding and delivery plan.
- **Set up governance bodies** - to convene action across the region.

Outcomes: Momentum, credibility, stakeholder alignment, early wins identified, Team ready

2. Phase B: Long-term support to maintain progress

A multi-year commitment to resource and fund the delivery of Suffolk's mission-led cluster strategy.

Proposed activities:

- **Mission roadmaps** - Develop clear pathways for each mission with defined KPIs and milestones.

- **Cluster Delivery Programme** – Develop the action plans to underpin identified interventions per cluster.
- **Investment Prospectus** - Develop a compelling proposition to secure the right partners and investments for the missions and clusters.
- **Regional Alignment** – Coordinate and ensure synergy with Norfolk's missions and cluster development activity.
- **Innovation Challenge Fund** – Design and launch a fund to stimulate innovation activity.
- **Ongoing Investment and Partnerships** – secure sustained public and private sector backing.

Outcomes: Long-term coordination, national influence and visibility, investor confidence, cross-regional collaboration, mission-led innovation pipeline.

This will be worked up as part of Phase A and will be subject to further review and procurement.