

Suffolk Business Board - 26th March 2025

Agenda Item 4a – Developing a Joint Growth Manifesto

Purpose: To update the Board on the draft Norfolk and Suffolk Growth Manifesto, share the Joint Working Group's initial feedback, and seek steer on audience and use, proposition, and structure (Paper 4b). This is a working draft for the Business Boards to shape and refine.

The Board are invited to:

- **Consider**
 - **Audience and intended use** who the primary audience should be and how the document could also be used with secondary audiences. (e.g. with government, investors and national partners).
 - **Overall proposition** – whether it is compelling, distinctive and positioned effectively for a national audience.
 - **Structure** – the Board's reflections on whether the document flows well and any areas they feel could be adjusted or strengthened.
- **Note** That we are working to have the document ready for UKREiiF in May, a key opportunity to showcase Norfolk and Suffolk.
- **Agree** To delegate authority to the Joint Working Group to finalise and sign off the document ahead of UKREiiF.

Background

At the joint meeting of the Norfolk and Suffolk Business Boards on the 11th of November, it was agreed a joint executive summary of the Norfolk Local Growth Plan, and the Suffolk Economic Strategy would be developed, bringing together the shared priorities and economic strengths of both counties.

The intention is to create a clear joint proposition for Norfolk and Suffolk that can support engagement with government, investors and national partners.

The document will present a single, compelling proposition for growth while preserving the integrity and identity of both local plans.

Whilst the work was initially intended to support devolution discussions, both Boards agreed that developing a shared economic narrative remains valuable.

At the same meeting, it was agreed a joint working group would be established with representatives from each Business Board to steer development, drive collaboration and maintain momentum between joint Board meetings.

Nick Steven-Jones and Stephen Crocker, with Nova Fairbank (Norfolk), and Mark Pendlington, Paul Agar and Doug Field (Suffolk) volunteered to join the group - with Nick and Mark attending as Business Board Chairs - and the group held its first meeting on 16 March to discuss the emerging document.

The document has been framed as a 'Norfolk and Suffolk Growth Manifesto' to signal a confident statement of the region's economic opportunity. The joint working group noted mixed views on the term 'Manifesto' versus 'Prospectus', with final terminology to be agreed as the document evolves.

A small team from Norfolk County Council and Suffolk Economy have worked together to produce the draft.

The Proposition

The draft positions Norfolk and Suffolk as a place where several of the UK's critical systems come together.

The region plays a national significant role in:

Powering the UK - through offshore wind in the southern North the nuclear Sizewell and a growing clean energy cluster.

Connecting the UK - through advanced communications technology Adastral Park and globally significant ports linking the UK the global markets.

Feeding the UK - through one of the country's most productive Agri-Food economies, combined with globally recognised strength in agri-tech, bioscience and food innovation.

Innovating for the future - through strengths in digital and technology development, research and sector convergence, supported by advanced manufacturing and engineering (AME) that helps turn innovation into real-world solutions.

Together these strengths create a distinctive economic opportunity. Norfolk and Suffolk are not only home to many of the UK's critical systems, but we also have the capability to help transform them, accelerating the shift to cleaner, smarter, next generation systems. Norfolk and Suffolk are the only place in the UK where the systems come together at this scale.

Structure of the Document

The document is designed to clearly show why Norfolk and Suffolk matter and where the future high growth opportunities are.

Some statistics in the draft are still being checked and finalised. All data will be fully validated and referenced in the final version.

Section 1 – Forward, Ambitions, Commitments and First Moves

This section sets out the region's strengths, shared ambitions, Business Board commitments and a set of initial first moves. Infographics and a map highlight key assets and infrastructure.

Section 2 - Innovation-Led Growth: High- Growth Sector and Clusters

This section provides further detail on the high-growth sectors and clusters that sit at the heart of the proposition - clean energy, agri-food and agri-tech, digital creative and advanced technologies, AME and ports and logistics.

Each sector section highlights:

- Existing strengths
- The growth opportunity and actions required
- The potential scale of growth
- Examples of key infrastructure investment and enabling activity

The investment examples are illustrative could be tweaked. Further work is underway to ensure the most prominent and representative investments are included, with all information verified before publication.

These high-growth sectors are underpinned by strong foundation sectors that provide the skills and services needed for growth these are recognised in this section.

Section 3 – Delivering on Our Commitment

This final section highlights some of the work the two Business Boards are already driving together.

Feedback from the Joint Working Group

Feedback	Details
Clarify the target audience for the document	Broader than mayoral candidates, but they remain important. Key aim is to set out our collective offer to UK plc, highlight wider growth opportunities, and reflect the Mayoral responsibilities.
Document titles and wording	Mixed views on ‘Manifesto’ vs ‘Prospectus’ to be concluded as the document develops.
Alignment with government	Hardwire the Modern Industrial Strategy throughout the document.
Language	Terms like <i>critical</i> and <i>systems</i> felt negative/unclear, so wording will be strengthened.
Place proposition	Sell the place, not just the economy: a great place to live, work, invest and visit, built on outstanding natural and cultural assets.
Investment-readiness	Highlight investment ready projects in high growth sectors and include bold commitments (e.g. Suffolk’s £4:£1 investment ambition.)
Unlocking Growth	Emphasise that water, energy and planning barriers must be addressed to unlock growth, backed by the joint Energy and Water Plans.
Amplify the foundational economy	Amplify how the foundational economy enables growth sectors and make the intellectual economy explicit—HE/FE, Norwich Research Park and LSIPs powering the talent pipeline.
Asset map	Distinguish nationally significant assets from locally important ones.

The group also supported the Executive Team’s suggestions to set out clear asks of government, drawing on live conversations (e.g. Creative Industries Cluster bid), and to develop focused one-page narratives that go deeper on each strength or opportunity and set out the offer and ask alongside the core Growth Manifesto. They also agreed on aligning with government priorities on energy, food security and defence, emphasising Norfolk and Suffolk’s role as net contributors.

Next Steps

- **Refine the draft** following Board feedback and (if agreed) delegated authority to the Joint Working Group. Two further design and editing stages are scheduled with our design partner, Naked Marketing.
- **Joint Working Group meets again** in mid-April to review updates with signoff planned for early May ahead of UKREiiF.
- **Launch at UKREiiF** using the document to showcase Norfolk and Suffolk’s growth story to investors and government.

Lisa Roberts

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