

Suffolk Business Board Paper

Item 3: Norfolk and Suffolk Growth Champions

Date: 4th June 2026

Purpose: This paper sets out a proposed approach for how Business Board Growth Champions could support the

The Board are asked to:

- Approve the proposed Growth Champion model
- Provide feedback and direction on the proposed areas of focus and operating approach.

The Business Boards Joint Working group will oversee further refinement of the preferred Growth Champion model ahead of the Joint Business Board meeting on 30th July, with implementation proposed from September 2026.

1. Context

Norfolk and Suffolk Business Boards have published a joint Growth Proposition, which positions the two counties as a nationally significant economy. It provides a shared cross-county narrative explaining why Norfolk and Suffolk matter to the UK economy and where greater collaboration can create additional impact. It has been agreed that it is necessary in some scenarios for the economies to be positioned this way; in other scenarios a Suffolk first approach will be the right one.

The Business Board Joint Working Group has discussed the potential role of 'Growth Champions'. Growth Champions are intended to provide a mechanism to:

- Strengthen collaboration across Norfolk and Suffolk, where there is benefit to this.
- Support the development of cross-county investment opportunities and collaborative activity.
- Champion the strengths and opportunities in the Norfolk and Suffolk economies.

The model is intended to complement existing structures, not duplicate them:

- Business Board Chairs will remain the principal voice of the Boards.
- Industry Boards will continue to provide sector leadership and expertise.
- Growth Champions will focus on driving collaboration and shared opportunities.

2. The Role of Growth Champions

The two Business Boards would jointly appoint a number of Growth Champions, each responsible for an economic portfolio. They would act as convenors, helping maintain momentum around key opportunities linked to the Growth Proposition.

Each Growth Champion would:

- Be an existing Board member (with co-option by exception where specialist expertise is required).
- Act on behalf of both counties.
- Serve for a fixed period.

- Operate under agreed joint terms of reference.
- Act in a strictly non-partisan capacity.
- Develop a shared, investable portfolio of investment opportunities aligned to the Norfolk & Suffolk Growth Proposition and in conjunction with existing regional industry/sector-specific bodies.
- Take a lead role in connecting existing Industry Boards, sector groups and partners around shared opportunities and coordinating activity across their portfolios.
- Provide periodic updates to the Business Boards on opportunities, activity and emerging challenges.
- Championing Norfolk and Suffolk's strengths through events, engagement and external activity.
- Support engagement with government where relevant, and when requested by the Business Board chairs.

3. Value Proposition of Growth Champions

At present, the region's priority sectors are represented by multiple Industry Boards (see Appendix A). While the existing Industry and Business Board structures are strong and effective, there is currently no single mechanism that consistently connects them.

Growth Champions are proposed as a mechanism to strengthen collaboration across the existing landscape, driving greater alignment around shared opportunities, and help maintain momentum around the Growth Proposition.

Currently, sector leadership is distributed across multiple groups, which can make it harder to present a consistent investment narrative. Establishing Growth Champions could help provide clearer sector leadership, improve prioritisation, and strengthen coordination across the system.

Growth Champions will help connect activity across partnerships and programmes where there is mutual benefit and opportunity for greater collaboration.

In their role, Growth Champions will help to unlock regional growth by representing their portfolio to private and public investors, such as Local Innovation Partnership fund.

4. Portfolios for Growth Champions

The Norfolk and Suffolk Growth Proposition is centred around the convergence of key economic strengths and opportunities across both counties. It is therefore proposed that any Growth Champion approach should align to the core sectors set out within the Growth Proposition.

This approach would help maintain focus on the shared opportunities and investment activity needed to support delivery of the Growth Proposition.

The proposed portfolios will therefore include:

- **Energy Security & Systems** – including strategic energy infrastructure.
- **Agri-Food, Agri-Tech & Bioscience** – including Agri-Food, Agri-Tech, and Bioscience and food innovation.

- **Ports, Logistics & Trade Connectivity** – including Ports, Logistics, and Trade connectivity.
- **Advanced Manufacturing & Industrial Innovation** – including Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, and Industrial Innovation.
- **Creative and Visitor Economies** – including Creative Industries, Arts, Culture and Heritage, and Visitor Economy.
- **Skills, Workforce & Inclusive Growth** – including Education & Skills, workforce development, and inclusive growth and access to opportunities.
- **Foundational Services** – including Financial & Professional Services, Construction, Health and Social Care, and other foundational services enabling growth.

Digital and Technology is not represented as it is a cross-cutting theme.

Each portfolio will link to relevant Industry Boards (see Appendix A) and will be led by a single Growth Champion acting on behalf of Norfolk and Suffolk.

5. Nomination and selection of Growth Champions

Nomination - Business Board members are invited to self-nominate and/or to be nominated by other individuals, submitting their details through an application template which will be issued closer to the opening date of nominations.

Selections will be completed over the summer by a panel that will include the Chairs of the Norfolk and Suffolk Business Boards. Selection criteria will be pre-determined in advance of the panel review.

6. Timeline

June: Board discussion and refinement

July: Joint Business Board consideration (30 July)

Summer: Engagement with Industry Boards

September 2026: Implementation

Appendix A

Growth Proposition Sectors	Industry Boards
Energy Security and Systems	GENERATE. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk
	EEEGR (East of England Energy Group). Geography: East of England
	East Wind. Geography: East of England
	Clean Tech East. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk (Clean Energy)
Agri-Food, Agri-Tech & Bioscience	Agri-Food Industry Council. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk
	Agri-TechE. Geography: National
	Tastebuds Collective. Geography: Norfolk
	Anglia Innovation Partnership LLP Board. Geography: Norfolk
Ports, Logistics & Trade Connectivity	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce Transport and Infrastructure Group. Geography: Suffolk
	Hive Connect. Geography: National
	Transport East. Geography: East of England
Advanced Manufacturing & Industrial Innovation	NAAME Board. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk
	Freeport East (note, not an industry board). Geography: Stowmarket.
Creative, Digital & Visitor Economies	Council for Digital Tech. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk
	Tech East. Geography: East of England
	Creative Industries Board (CIB). Geography: East of England
	Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk
	LVEP Board. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk
	Game Anglia. Geography: East of England
	Games in the East Steering Group. Geography: East of England
	The Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation (DMO). Geography: Suffolk
	Cyber East. Geography: East of England
	Space East. Geography: East of England.
Skills, Workforce & Inclusive Growth	Norfolk Employment & Skills Board. Geography: Norfolk
	Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP Group. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk
	Suffolk Skills, Employment and Lifelong Development Advisory Board. Geography: Suffolk.
	Norfolk and Suffolk Digital Sector Skills Group. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk
	Norfolk and Suffolk Skills Groups (Digital, Construction (known as Building Growth), Agri-Skills East, Clean Energy, Net Zero, Social Care and Health). Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk.
	Business in the Community (BITC) Norwich Leadership Board. Geography: Norwich
	Adult Skills and Employment Board. Geography: Suffolk.
	Empowering Communities Partnership. Geography: Norfolk
	Get Suffolk Working Partnership Board. Geography: Suffolk.
	FIG (Finance Industry Group). Geography: Norfolk
Foundational Services	FIPS (Financial, Insurance, and Professional Services) Group. Geography: Suffolk
	FinTech East. Geography: East of England

	Construction East. Geography: East of England
	Suffolk Joint Construction Committee. Geography: Suffolk
	NHS Norfolk and Suffolk Integrated Care Board. Geography: Norfolk and Suffolk