

Westhall Parish Report
East Suffolk Council GLI Group – Councillor Update

Funding available to support farmland birds in East Suffolk

Landowners and managers within East Suffolk are being invited to apply for funding to help protect vulnerable bird species living within the district's farmed landscapes.

The East Suffolk Farmland Bird Support Fund (FBSF) which is being delivered by East Suffolk Council has been established to reduce the impact of the Sizewell C project on farmland birds.

A total of around £300,000 in funding is set to be awarded, with grants of between £5,000 and £15,000 to help landowners and users to deliver projects that will create, restore, and enhance habitats for birds that use farmland for cover, nesting and to find food.

Examples of how the funding could be spent include:

- Planting wildflowers along field edges, creating meadows, and leaving areas of rough grass
- Planting native hedges, trees, and shrubs, and enhancing existing hedges
- Making ponds and introducing marginal planting
- Providing places for birds to nest
- Giving extra food to farmland birds during the winter

Councillor Tom Daly, East Suffolk's cabinet member for Energy and Climate Change, said: "The Suffolk coast has a rich biodiversity with many important and rare bird species such as Yellowhammers, Turtle Doves and Stone-curlews, which rely on farmland to survive.

"We want to work with farmers, gamekeepers and landowners to help protect and encourage bird species to thrive, with priority given to projects from areas most affected by the Sizewell C project.

"We recognise the vital role farmers and landowners fulfil in conservation, so we want to collaborate to help protect and encourage bird species to thrive. Priority will be given to projects from areas most affected by the Sizewell C project, but we're inviting applicants to think creatively about how this funding can be used.

“What would be of particular benefit would be the establishment of permanent unsprayed field margins or the developing wildlife corridors, as they make use of uncultivated land to support biodiversity.”

Landowners or managers with land used for farming or next to farmland can apply, or if the land has been identified to be within a ‘Natural Environment Improvement Area’, though projects outside this area may also be considered.

Those interested in applying for the funding will need to submit an expression of interest form which will outline their proposal, with the council providing guidance where required before being invited to submit a full application. Funding will be distributed on a first come first served basis until all the money has been awarded.

Three Councils For Suffolk: Big enough to deliver, local enough to care

On 7 August, the five district and borough councils of Suffolk, Babergh, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk, and West Suffolk, launched their joint Three Councils for Suffolk proposal; it is a locally led plan to reshape local government and deliver stronger, more responsive services to communities across the county.

This proposal offers an alternative to Suffolk County Council’s vision of a single “mega council,” instead championing a structure that is big enough to deliver, local enough to care.

Suffolk is a county of contrasts, from coastal towns and rural villages to vibrant urban centres. The Three Councils For Suffolk proposal recognises this diversity and is built on three strong foundations: local leadership, tailored services, and financial sustainability.

The preferred option of three councils would each serve distinct regions anchored by Suffolk’s largest towns, Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and Lowestoft. This meets the government guidance that the new council areas have a “clear rationale”, they are “sensible economic areas” and have “sensible geographies”.

The Three Unitary Councils plan responds directly to what people across Suffolk have said they want: councils that are local, greater accountability with local councillor leadership, and provide services that understand and reflect the needs of Suffolk’s diverse communities.

It also delivers value for money. Independent analysis by KPMG shows the model could unlock £34 million in annual savings, while allowing reinvestment of £20 million every year back into vital services such as social care, highways, and housing.

This model also strengthens the voice of Suffolk in the new Mayoral Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk, ensuring that local issues, whether rural or urban, aren’t lost in a county-wide approach.

It will:

- Put residents first, with services delivered by councils that know their communities.
- Empower town and parish councils, making sure they are fully engaged in decision-making.
- Support businesses by aligning council structures with Suffolk's real economic geography.
- Enable the voluntary and community sector to thrive through better engagement and fairer funding.
- Enable councils to continue to work together across Suffolk where there is commonality of service, through shared service arrangements for additional efficiency.

This proposal has been shaped by the views of over 2,200 respondents in an online survey run by the five councils, with more than one-third of respondents ranking “being local” as their top priority for future councils. There has also been widespread engagement with towns, parishes, businesses and other stakeholders.

Joint quote from the Suffolk district and borough Leaders – Cllr John Ward (Babergh DC), Cllr Caroline Topping (East Suffolk DC), Cllr Neil McDonald (Ipswich BC), Cllr Andy Mellen (Mid Suffolk DC), Cllr Cliff Waterman (West Suffolk DC):

“People across Suffolk are proud of where they live, and they want decisions made by those who understand their communities. The Three Councils For Suffolk proposal delivers just that. It offers a balance between strong councillors’ leadership and genuine local delivery, ensuring that our towns, villages, urban centres and coastlines and the communities and businesses within these areas, all get the attention they deserve. By staying close to our communities, we can provide better value, greater accountability, and reinvest millions back into vital services like social care, housing and infrastructure. This is how we build a more responsive, resilient and inclusive Suffolk that works for everyone.”

Over the coming weeks work will continue to finalise the proposals, with the five councils working closely together to present an option to council meetings during September, in readiness to submit the Three Councils for Suffolk proposal on 26 September 2025.

Find out more, including more detailed financial information and the proposed boundaries at: **threecouncilsforsuffolk.org**

Helping town and parishes to support nature

Prepared by environmental charity Groundwork East on behalf of East Suffolk Council, a new toolkit is now available for town and parish councils to support conservation in their local area.

As part of the Council's Nature at Work scheme, the toolkit contains branded graphics for town and parish councils to use online to promote their involvement with the conservation scheme, which has created 116 wild spaces across East Suffolk which are being left to grow over the summer.



New signs have been installed on council-owned land across the district to help identify the wild areas where grass cutting will be limited to twice per year for the benefit of pollinators such as bees and butterflies. The signs feature a QR code directing people to further information about the scheme, including how residents and community groups can get involved. A map of all the sites is available, and photos from the locations will be added throughout the year.

Groundwork East is currently working with town and parish councils to build awareness of the sites, and these councils are encouraged to help monitor the sites to better understand what species are present and how the sites are changing.

GLI Cllr Sally Noble, East Suffolk's cabinet member for the Environment said: "Nature at Work aims to respond to the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis by supporting nature at small-scale community sites across East Suffolk. The refreshed scheme has a new focus this year, working with local schools, town and parish councils and community groups to raise awareness of the benefits of the Nature at Work scheme and encouraging people to consider how they can get involved in their own garden or community space."

A guide to making a wildflower meadow, a species guide and information regarding funding opportunities for town and parish councils is also available.

Book your free place at: eastsuffolk.gov.uk/environment/nature-at-work/

Ease the Squeeze on Cost of Living

Are you, or someone you know, worried about the increasing cost of living? We understand the pressures faced by many people today and we are working closely with key partners to ensure support is available to help ease the squeeze for households in East Suffolk.

To make it as easy as possible for you to access the services and support available, locally and nationally, we have gathered information about them in one place:
www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/

For the most up to date information regarding East Suffolk Council, please visit:
www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk

View the Well Minds East Suffolk booklet: tinyurl.com/9xhka624