

# SUFFOLK VIEW

The magazine of the Suffolk Preservation Society



## 'NATURAL DISASTERS' AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS

What you should do when the worst happens

**Tony Redman** MA FRICS IHBC is a Suffolk based conservation accredited chartered surveyor and historic building consultant. He was formerly a partner in a local firm of architects and conservation surveyors, and a trustee of SPS.

*"You need to come back now; your home has blown away"* said a friend on the phone. It was 4.30pm on 23rd August 2010. A tornado had taken the roof off our house, demolished adjoining buildings and fired walnuts from our neighbour's tree through our 18th century glazed windows. After the initial panic had subsided, we arrived home to find our precious listed building looking as though it had had its teeth knocked out.

The chimney had fallen through part of the roof, the slates and tiles had been blown away from other parts, the front door had stuck shut and the cat had disappeared. That night we had torrential rain. Neighbours rallied round with tarpaulins, buckets and casseroles, and by 10pm we were more or less watertight, thanks to the generosity of a local builder and the village community. It was an object lesson in coping with a disaster.

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Fiona Cairns

Director, Suffolk Preservation Society

Welcome to the spring edition of Suffolk View, as we emerge after a long winter of ravaging storms. Our lead article focuses on how we can make our homes more resilient to flooding as we adapt to a wetter and warmer climate.

We also dedicate this edition to celebrating some of our county's heroes, past and present, reflecting on the work of Suffolk's adopted son, writer and historian George Ewart Evans (page 10), and announcing the results of our Heritage Champions Awards (page 5).

Last year was an exceptionally demanding year for the Society's professional planning team. In 2023 a total of 56 representations were made in response to planning applications, relating to 51 separate schemes. I am pleased to report that of the 28 schemes so far decided, SPS can demonstrate a positive impact on 21 of the outcomes, always with a focus on defending our natural and built heritage and seeking to drive up design standards.

SPS planners have also made a total of 18 responses to local and national policy consultations. These include six Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, six government policy consultations (including four on NSIP policy) and four local government policy consultations.

The revised National Policy Statements on energy and its transmission were brought into force in January and raise major challenges for Suffolk – namely the creation of a new “need” trump card known as a “critical national priority”. In essence, this will allow the wider national interest of energy generation to prevail and doubles down on the government requirement for quicker and cheaper delivery of more energy infrastructure. We consider that the revised policies deliver a potentially overly directive and environmentally

insensitive framework for decision makers, with a focus on reducing timescales and massively reducing the scope for democratic participation, including moves to limit rights to judicial review (favouring speed over quality and accountability). This is a very grave threat for Suffolk as we find ourselves in the eye of the storm of what is known as the *Great Grid Upgrade*. Our joint report with Norfolk and Essex CPRE seeks to tackle this head on (see page 20) and challenges the case for the need and the technology choices on which the proposed grid upgrade in the region is predicated.

Turning to lighter matters, it is that time of year when your SPS Membership card will be arriving on your doormats. We hope you will make good use of this 2 for 1 entry to a range of historic sites, as a benefit of your membership.

Finally, our 2024 events programme kicks off with a spring visit to Staverton Forest. Expert arboriculturist, Gary Battell will be taking the walk and talk, courtesy of the Kemball family, to explain how this fascinating ancient landscape is being maintained. The event has limited numbers so do book early. A light lunch will be provided and it will be a perfect opportunity to picnic amongst the bluebells - weather permitting!

“ This is a very grave threat for Suffolk as we find ourselves in the eye of the storm of what is known as the *Great Grid Upgrade*. ”

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## ‘Natural disasters’ and historic buildings

### What you should do when the worst happens

Climate warming has come home. In the future we are much more likely to have our homes adversely affected by flooding and storms. The disastrous flooding which affected so many in Suffolk in 2023 was a wakeup call.



### So what can we do to protect ourselves?

Well, few of us are able to build walls round our homes as flood boundaries like a certain gent who hit the news in Shropshire recently, but we can do something. This will include:

Checking and cleaning out rainwater goods, gullies and drains on a regular basis

Checking roofing, render and plasterwork to ensure the building is as watertight as possible

Minimising hard standings close to the building, ensuring that water can drain away naturally

Keeping ditches and ponds well cleaned out

Know as much as you can about your building, its construction, history and any uncertainties

Make sure you know where to turn off the mains services. Many people take these things for granted

Before you purchase your home, you or someone else should have checked the flooding risk on the government website

[check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk](https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk)

and asked the former owners about recent history of flooding.

# “ The disastrous flooding which affected so many in Suffolk in 2023 was a wakeup call. ”

Cover  
Recent flooding at  
Thornham Magna

Page 2  
Many residents now  
have sandbags ready

Page 3 Left  
Ditches overflowing  
and road flooding  
in Thornham  
Magna

Page 3 Right  
Makeshift flood  
defences

Keep checking your buildings and contents insurance to make sure you are covered for relevant risks, and that the rebuilding value of your home is up to date. Recently, significant rises in rebuilding costs have made a big impact. If you have to make a claim, most companies will invoke an average clause and only give you back a proportion of your claim, subject to the extent to which your buildings are underinsured. You can check your rebuilding value by measuring the outside footprint and checking against the Building Cost Information Service calculator

[calculator.bcis.co.uk](http://calculator.bcis.co.uk)

but note that listed buildings are not specifically covered and you may need specialist advice, particularly for bigger properties and timber framed buildings. It is always best to get the insurance company to lead on this to keep the potential risk of underinsurance as low as possible.

## What should you do when disaster happens?

First of all, call your insurance company. They will have emergency services on call who can help protect and start to dry out your home.

Retaining as much of the structure as possible is key, and starting to dry out the building as soon as you can will pay dividends later on. Make sure the mains services are isolated, and that the risk of further damage is limited as far as you can. You will probably need professional help. Your local conservation officer may be able to advise of local professionals with appropriate expertise. There will be conservation accredited architects, surveyors, technicians and engineers who have a proven track record of appropriate experience. It is equally important to find someone you get on with and feel you can trust. See the list of contacts at the end of this article for further information. Soft furnishings will need specialist cleaning, and will also retain moisture which is harmful to the reinstatement of the building structure.

The insurance company will invariably appoint a loss adjuster to act on their behalf. Their role is to restore the building to its original condition within the conditions of the policy, and at the same time to achieve this with the minimum cost to the insurance company itself. They are not necessarily your best buddy, and you may decide to appoint your

own loss adjuster to protect your interests. Their cost will almost always be outside the cover provided by the insurance company, so you will need to be prepared to pay for them yourself, but this might prove financially beneficial in the long run.

The drying out needs to be started as soon, and undertaken as carefully, as possible. This will include dehumidifiers, and opening doors and windows to maximise natural ventilation. It will take many months rather than weeks. Traditionally constructed buildings are very resilient, otherwise they would have disintegrated long ago, but there will be issues which come to light and careful drying out cannot be hurried. The first issue will be mould growth. Wearing protective clothing, at the very least a good quality face mask, keep cleaning off the black mould by washing with detergent, or if really bad, use a weak bleach solution. You may have to do this several times.

As the building dries out, it will pass through the temperature and moisture levels conducive to wet rot and dry rot and which excite wood boring beetles. Previously dormant activity will come back to life again, and some localised treatment maybe necessary,



## 'Natural disasters' and historic buildings

### What you should do when the worst happens

but bear in mind that when moisture and humidity levels return to normal, these will probably return to dormancy. Any voids will need to be opened up to aid drying. Lime renders will probably return to normal, but cement renders are very likely to detach. Efflorescence will occur on brickwork. Although it looks scary, it is usually harmless and will dissipate in time, but you can brush or vacuum it off.

Reinstatement needs to be done carefully, retaining as much of the original structure as you can. Keep in close contact with your conservation officer who will be able to guide you as to what might require formal consent. Long term dampness associated with frost will be an issue, but timber frames are more likely to be resilient. Take any opportunity you can to upgrade the building with insulation. Don't bother to reinstate black plinths. These were a mistaken Victorian improvement, largely promoted to find a use for black bitumen which was a by-product of town gas production. Medieval plinths were designed to vent moisture away to the outside to help protect the sole plate and internal finishes. Avoid wonder waterproofing solutions and keep the refurbished building as moisture vapour permeable as you can.



A resident attempts to evacuate water from a cottage due to flooding

You may well need to move out for a considerable period of time. We were fortunate. The kitchen and the bathroom and bedroom above it were unscathed. We stayed at home for as long as we could, even though the insurance company offered alternative accommodation.

The cat returned and we got our home back, more thermally efficient and better protected for future storms than it was before. We will hand it on to the next generation in better order than we received it.

No disaster needs necessarily to be a catastrophe.

Article in *The Sun* from August 2010 about the tornado that damaged Tony Redman's property



## Where to find help:

Finding a specialist conservation accredited professional:

[hespr.ihbc.org.uk](http://hespr.ihbc.org.uk)

search for Historic Environment Service Providers Recognition (HESPR) IHBC Conservation Professionals

[architecture.com](http://architecture.com)

search for conservation accredited architects

[rics.org](http://rics.org)

search for conservation accredited surveyors

[istructe.org](http://istructe.org)

[ice.co.uk](http://ice.co.uk)

search for accredited engineers

[ciob.org](http://ciob.org)

search for accredited architectural technicians

[cila.co.uk](http://cila.co.uk)

loss adjusters



Find further advice on flooding and disaster recovery:

[spab.org.uk](http://spab.org.uk)

[historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

both have online advice and downloadable booklets

To assess the rebuilding value of your house:

[calculator.bcis.co.uk](http://calculator.bcis.co.uk)

# SPS Heritage Champion Award Winners 2024

We were delighted with the excellent response to our 2024 Heritage Champion Awards. The quantity and the quality of the nominations has been frankly overwhelming. It is positively life affirming to witness so much good work carried out by so many volunteers, giving up their time and being rewarded only by the knowledge that they are doing something really good.

The following pages celebrate the most amazing people, doing the most amazing things for Suffolk's heritage. We have divided the winners into five categories: Amenity Society Leaders; Community; Landscape; Ecclesiastical; and Suffolk's Architectural Historians. We would also like to thank all those who took the time to make their nominations - your contribution is invaluable, and without you, the awards would not be the success that they are. So, without further ado, we are thrilled to bring you the winners of the 2024 Suffolk Heritage Champion Awards.

## Amenity Society Leaders

Award winner:

**John Norman 1947 - 2024**

Nominated by: *The Ipswich Society*

John Norman made an outstanding contribution to the heritage of Suffolk and Ipswich in particular as Chair of the Ipswich Society since 2012. He was also a member of the Ipswich Borough Council's Conservation and Design Panel (for over 20 years) and a member of the Ipswich Waterfront Partnership, which helped to guide the transformation from dilapidated docks to the vibrant waterfront of today.

John was also a Trustee and Chairman of the Suffolk Architectural Heritage Trust, which has recently merged with the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust to form Historic Suffolk.

He was also a trustee of the Ipswich Building Preservation Trust and The Northgate Foundation. He was an adjudicator of the Civic Trust Awards and RIBA Suffolk, Annual Craftsmanship Awards. He was a member of the Ipswich Maritime Trust, Ipswich Heritage Forum, Suffolk Family History Society and Ipswich Transport Society.

John also arranged and led walks and talks, and wrote articles about Ipswich's heritage which educated and enthused others. He frequently answered questions from individuals about Ipswich buildings. As a former lecturer in building construction at West Suffolk College, he was also renowned for his annual 'study tours' of northern towns, interesting buildings, manufacturing plants (building materials) and large span bridges.



*Editor: We were sorry to learn of John's death in February and send our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. He will be greatly missed.*

Award winner:

**Martyn Taylor**

**Chair of the Bury Society**

Nominated by: *Melanie Lesser, SPS Member*

Martyn Taylor has made a longstanding contribution to protecting and promoting the heritage of Bury St Edmunds. He has been Chairman of The Bury Society since 2016, having been on the executive committee since 2006. He has lived in Bury St Edmunds all his life and is the go-to person when it comes to all things relating to the history of Bury.

He is a published author of 11 books on the town including *Secret Bury St Edmunds*, *Bury St Edmunds in 50 Buildings*, and *Abbey 1000*. The latest book, *Bury St Edmunds Through Time* was published in 2023. His weekly column in the Bury Free Press, Looking Back

with Martyn Taylor, is a much loved and popular read, often describing little known nostalgic gems of information. Always keen to share the town's history with both residents and tourists, Martyn is also a very popular tour guide for the town and Abbey of St Edmund.

He is involved in many of the heritage groups in the town including The Past and Present Society and The Abbey Partnership Group, which help to organise events to celebrate the town's rich history.

In 2012 he was instrumental in getting eight new Blue Plaques installed around the town which included author Charles Dickens and artist Sybil Andrews.

In 2023 he was part of a group who successfully lobbied Greggs to start repairs to their 17th century building in Abbeygate Street which had become very rundown.



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# SPS Heritage Champion Award Winners 2024

## Community

Award winners:

### Trustees of the Excelsior Trust

Nominated by: *Jamie Campbell, chair of Excelsior Trust*

The Excelsior Trust was founded in 1982 to rebuild the sailing trawler Excelsior LT 472, built in Lowestoft in 1921 by John Chambers. The reconstruction was completed and the vessel was recommissioned in 1988. Excelsior is the most authentically restored sailing smack in the UK and is included in the National Historic Ships Register as one of only approximately fifty most important historic vessels in the country. She is also the only surviving smack to be equipped with a traditional 50' beam trawl to fish in the time-honoured fashion. Excelsior is built from roughly 100 tons of oak and is maintained at The Excelsior Yard on Oulton Broad. The yard is a working shipyard but retains a bias towards heritage and wooden vessels.



Today Excelsior earns her keep as a sail training vessel for young people and since 1990, with the help of a dedicated group of volunteers, has taken around 11,000, often disadvantaged, young people to sea. Excelsior's survival has been a massive effort by a wide range of individuals including: three full time crew, a yard manager (who is also a Relief Skipper), a part time PR

person, sales and admin officer and a book keeper. Trustees are essential volunteers and there are a large number (probably another fifty) who freely give their time towards either fundraising or maintaining the boat. This award recognises the enduring effort of many people to maintain this important maritime heritage while delivering significant social capital.

Award winners:

### Paupers Grave Volunteers

Nominated by: *Onehouse Parish Council*

At the turn of the millennium Onehouse Parish Council purchased the Paupers Graves site to the rear of the former Stow Union Workhouse which was in a completely neglected state. Since then, a small but extremely dedicated group of volunteers has looked after the site and the hundreds of bodies buried within with great care and dedication every week regardless of the weather.

They have cleared the site of dead and fallen trees/brambles, identified where the graves are; located and displayed artefacts found onsite such as the cast-iron grave marker crosses along with information boards. In addition to this they have opened the site to public access with a proper entrance and footpath around the site as well as siting a couple of benches to allow quiet reflection in this tranquil little spot.

The Pauper's Care Team at the moment are John Baldwin, Richard Cook, John Corker, John Emsden, Ian Fraser, David Nicholson, Phil James and Ray Taylor they have a combined age of 637!

The have been supported over the years by other volunteers Mike Chase, Arlene Cruickshanks, Pauline Llewellyn, Margaret Fishburne, Ron and Jill Raisey, John Batchford, Audrey Russell-Howes, Ken Brown.



# Landscapes

Award winner:

## Gary Battell

Nominated by: *Lady Greenwell, trustee of Orford Museum*

Gary Battell, has worked tirelessly, selflessly and inspirationally in woodland management and education since 1974. Now Suffolk County Council's Woodland Advisory Officer, Gary previously worked for the Forestry Commission and the National Trust. His passion for trees started as a boy scout.

Gary's friendship with the late Dr Oliver Rackham brought him additional landscape history and ecology knowledge which he now passes on to a wide audience. He is a valued adviser to numerous organisations as well

as helping individuals to get into forestry or set up their own businesses.

Gary supports the management of Suffolk's Staverton Forest, 4,000 magnificent, ancient oaks, owned by the Kemball family. At the Woodland Heritage tree nursery in the forest, he raises acorns for young oaks and organises volunteer groups with the AONB (Coastal and Heath Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Gary has helped raise the profile and understanding of Acute Oak Decline (AOD), to help protect our oak tree heritage from disease.

Gary has also helped at Orford Museum, giving talks on Staverton Thicks and guided walks for no charge in turn to help raise funds for Orford Museum.



Second Left  
Gary Battell (Suffolk CC Senior Woodland Advisor)

Award winners:

## The Hadleigh Society

for protecting and researching an ancient landform or "Hollow way"

Nominated by: *Susan Clements on behalf of Residents Group*

The name Holloway comes from the Anglo-Saxon word which literally means 'sunken road'. Many going back as far as the iron age. They started life as either drove trails used to move animals from farms to markets, routes from inland to the sea ports, pilgrimage routes or simply boundary ditches.

The Hadleigh Holloway, formerly known as Bacon Lane or rather less flatteringly as Bridleway Number 11 (north of Hadleigh off Gallows Hill and Castle Road) overlooks the



Brett River Valley, is tree lined and possibly Medieval in date. The Hadleigh Society agreed with local residents that it should be

considered for inclusion in the Local List on the basis of the Town's Social and Agricultural development. It is also recognised as being an important local archaeological feature and was formally added to the Hadleigh Local List in September 2023 and the Suffolk Historic Environment Record.

Accordingly, the special historic and cultural importance of the Bacon Lane "Holloway" must now be taken into account when looking at planning applications, thus affording it some level of protection.

The Hadleigh Society, with the assistance of Hadleigh Archive carried out detailed studies using both old and new maps and historic records and documentation to investigate further. The local community feel that the Society is deserving of this award given the time expended by a really small team of volunteers.

Award winners:

## Suffolk Unforgettable Garden Project Volunteers

Nominated by: *Linden Groves, Head of Operations and Strategy, the Gardens Trust*

Working with Suffolk Gardens Trust, the team of passionate and hardworking volunteers from the Suffolk's Unforgettable Gardens Story project have learnt new skills and then contributed their time and expertise to research and record over 20 historic parks and gardens in Suffolk.

The result of this important work includes new additions to the Register of Parks and

Gardens of Special Historic Interest, through which the sites will be nationally designated and therefore given a better level of protection in the planning system. The intention is to also add research to the Historic Environment Record, helping support those conserving historic parks and gardens in Suffolk.

These brilliant volunteers deserve an award for being so willing to tackle new challenges and make such a significant contribution to the conservation of Suffolk's historic



parks and gardens for future generations. The Gardens Trust is replicating the project in other areas of the country, using the knowledge and experience gathered from the Suffolk volunteers along the way.

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# SPS Heritage Champion Award Winners 2024

## Suffolk's Architectural Historians

Award winners:

**John Walker, Timothy Easton and Philip Aitken**  
**A triumvirate of architectural historians**

Nominated by: *Edward Martin on behalf of Suffolk Historic Buildings Group*

The nominees have led the way in the understanding and appreciation of Suffolk's rich heritage of historic buildings, particularly its timber-framed domestic buildings. As well as their academic writings, they have all taken their discoveries and ideas to a wider public through countless talks and courses on these buildings across the county for well over 30 years. They have provided the bedrock for us to understand and effectively conserve an important part of our built heritage.

**Timothy Easton** is a professional artist. He was a contributor to the major 1970's study of Debenham's buildings, resulting in the 1979 exhibition 'Behind the Facade'. This study included the discovery of a unique surviving theatrical grandstand that led on to the interest in entertainment sites and the commissioned work for the Shakespeare Globe Theatre Trust.



He was the first to draw attention to the use of paint on early brickwork (papers in *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 1986 and in P. Oliver (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*, 1997). He was also a pioneer in recognising the presence of a variety of apotropaic marks and symbols on buildings and has written widely on the subject (chapters on 'Apotropaic Symbols and Other Measures for Protecting Buildings against Misfortune' and 'Spiritual Middens' in R. Hutton (ed.) *Physical Evidence for Ritual Acts, Sorcery and Witchcraft in Christian Britain*, 2015).



**Philip Aitken** is a retired historic buildings consultant. He worked on the Listed Buildings resurvey of Suffolk in the 1980s. He contributed sections on aisled halls and aisled barns to *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (1988, 1999). He co-authored *The Farmsteads of Suffolk. A Thematic Study* in 1998

[heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/media/pdfs/farmsteads/suffolkthematicsurvey1998rd.pdf](https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/media/pdfs/farmsteads/suffolkthematicsurvey1998rd.pdf)

He contributed a chapter on 'Queen-post roofs in East Anglia' in Walker (ed.) *The English Medieval Roof: Crownpost to Kingpost*, 2011. He has also written numerous reports on individual Suffolk buildings.



**John Walker** is a retired civil servant. Formerly based in Essex, he has lived in Suffolk for over 20 years; he is a former chairman of both the Essex Historic Buildings Group and the Herts and Essex Architectural Research Society. He is a specialist in the interpretation of timber-framed buildings, and has written many studies of buildings that have been published in the journal *Vernacular Architecture* ('An unusual timber-framed house in Essex' 1996; 'Late-twelfth & early-thirteenth-century aisled Buildings: A comparison' 1999; 'A square medieval timber-framed kitchen' 2000; 'A lobby-entrance house of 1615: Model Farm, Linstead Magna, Suffolk' 2003; 'The carpentry of a twelfth-century aisled hall: Burmington Manor, Warwickshire' 2013; 'Baythorne Hall, a raised-aisled hall in Birdbrook, Essex, and its relationship to other raised-aisled halls' 2014). He edited and contributed an introduction and an overview to *The English Medieval Roof: Crownpost to Kingpost*, Essex Historic Buildings Group 2011.

All three can be seen communicating their ideas on these videos from the 2021 Vernacular Architecture Group Spring Conference 2021:

[youtube.com/playlist?list=PLP-ojFvaknzXcpXJFt2g-LDFhogyuAllq](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLP-ojFvaknzXcpXJFt2g-LDFhogyuAllq)

## SPS Summer Event

Our Summer event at the Courtyard at Heveningham Hall on 18 July will include a presentation to all the SPS Heritage Champion Award winners. See page 25 for details.



# Ecclesiastical

Award winner:

## Hugo Smith

Nominated by: *Gill Hicks on behalf of Little Saxham PCC*

St. Nicholas Church, Little Saxham, nestled between Westley and Great Saxham, west of Bury St. Edmunds, has one of Suffolk's most spectacular Norman round towers, according to Nicolas Pevsner. It also has some of the most fascinating 16th and 17th century monuments, which have been hidden, locked away from public view in the vestry since 1893.

It has been Hugo Smith's vision, dedication and drive to raise the money to have two of these monuments restored, and most



importantly, to open up the space to enable all those visiting St Nicholas to see these magnificent monuments.

Hugo's determination to raise the thousands of pounds needed to do the job properly led him to apply to many charitable organisations. He encouraged the local parishioners, of under 40 households, to contribute generously to the appeal and helped organise a variety of diverse fundraising events. The result of his hard work has seen restoration work commence in December 2023, which will hopefully be finished by early summer this year. It was just in time: the two monuments were about to fall off the wall as their supports had almost rusted away.

The present generation, and those to follow, owe Hugo a great debt.

Award winner:

## Lynda Aldred

Lead volunteer on the digitisation of Suffolk church guides

Nominated by: *Geoffrey Probert, chair of the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust*

The project to digitise the Suffolk parish church guides was initiated by the Historic Churches Trust and launched in 2023. It was led by Lynda Aldred one of Suffolk's redoubtable band of Church Recorders. She volunteered to co-invent and act as the manager of the project, and without her tireless work this dream would never have been realised. She gave many hundreds of hours curating the just launched Suffolk Historic Churches Trust 'Guides to Suffolk Churches Online', tracking down guides, cajoling authors and churchwardens, scanning and loading them onto the site.

The project would have been impossible without the assistance of four great church scholars:

Simon Knott who for years has cycled across Suffolk to create an informative and personal perspective on each and every church in Suffolk on his website 'The Suffolk Churches Site'

[suffolkchurches.co.uk](https://suffolkchurches.co.uk)

and who has generously allowed us to link across to his accounts.

John Vigar, famous across England for his church tours and lectures <https://www.johnvigar.com/> and who most kindly allowed us to access and post his pdf library of Suffolk church guides.

Lay Canon Roy Tricker, the author of a great number of the church guides and one of our Vice Presidents. He not only given his copyright permission to post his guides,



but also lent us his unique library of Suffolk Church Guides.

Clive Paine, another prolific church guide writer and again one of our Vice Presidents, has given his copyright permission to post his guides.

The HCT would also like to thank all the churches and chapels who generously sent in their guides to the project.

Award winner:

## Simon Knott

Suffolk Churches online website

Nominated by: *Geoffrey Probert, chair of the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust*

Writer and photographer Simon Knott has been chronicling East Anglian churches for over twenty years. His hugely popular website covers every parish in Suffolk (as well as Cambridge, Norfolk and Essex). Besides chronicling thousands of sites and villages, often revisiting them, his writing betrays an inquiring Christian mind eager to share discoveries and indeed wonders. He allows the reader in to this silent English inheritance that reaches back to the early Christian world and

travels through history, from Viking Danelaw, to the birth of England, the Reformation, the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the transformation of our Roman Catholic heritage into a new Anglican world.

Whether it be cycling miles of hot East Anglian summer lanes or driving through flat, sparse winter landscapes, Simon always had his trusty Nikon D5300 ready to photograph a new church, often touring a dozen in a day – a practice, indeed a love, he has successfully handed on to thousands of church visitors across the East of England, both secular and religious.

However, Simon's websites do not merely document architectural features, they are the record of a deeply human fascination

with a living Christian history and a love of the numinous. They make up a unique pilgrimage of our times, of what we make of our extraordinary Christian inheritance and the cultural treasure of our buildings.



# Where are the Fellows who Cut the Hay?

Robert Ashton is a local author whose recently published book *Where are the Fellows who Cut the Hay* celebrates the work of author and oral historian George Ewart Evans. Here he reflects on the impact that Evans has had on his own writing and the many connections and parallels of the lives of the two authors.



George Ewart Evans (1 April 1909 – 11 January 1988) was a Welsh-born schoolteacher, writer and folklorist who became a dedicated collector of oral history and oral tradition in the East Anglian countryside from the 1940s to 1970s. His most famous work is *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay*, published in 1956.

Evans lived in the remote Suffolk village of Blaxhall between 1948 and 1956. Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay was inspired by conversations he had with his neighbour Robert Savage, a fourth generation Blaxhall shepherd, and realised he was hearing words that dated back to Chaucer's time. He later wrote that 'the main components of history are not things but people' and that listening to people is the key. (Evans, *Spoken History*, p.25). Evans became a respected oral

historian, writing a further eleven books about Suffolk's rural past over the next three decades.

Evans also left an important and extensive collection of oral history on tape relating to East Anglia, its village life, rural culture and dialect in a painstaking and sympathetic way, gathering anecdotes of the trades, the poverty, the migrant workers and the pre-modern rural way of life which was then still lingering in this remote corner of England.

I must be getting old, but I kept wondering what happened to the camaraderie and banter I used to enjoy, and sometimes endure, working as a teenager on Blackheath Estate at Friston. I'd started helping with the cows when I was 14, and at harvest time, carting corn, baling straw or running the drier at Decoy Farm. Farm work was then a team effort, while when driving past today, I might see one man on his own driving a giant tractor in the middle of a large field, but 50 years ago there were many men working a patchwork of fields, each separated by hedges and ditches.

Back then, at seven each morning, Nick the farm manager would meet the men outside the milking parlour at Firs Farm to give them their instructions for the day. There was Toby and his son Kenny, who drove Ford 5000s, and Tony who drove a smaller tractor, but always wore a tie and

trilby hat, I thought to counter the sense of inferiority that smaller tractor must have instilled. He'd married the daughter of Willie, the estate handyman who drove a bright blue Austin A30 van and seemed to be free to choose his tasks for the day, as he was rarely there with the other men to hear what was expected of him that day.

My parents were not sure what to make of my youthful passion for farming, having met when both working for Barclays Bank. My father was then manager of the Leiston branch and we lived in the flat above the bank, in the town centre. One Christmas, my parents bought me a copy of *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay*. That book influenced me like no other, because having been written at Blaxhall, a few miles from the farm I knew, it contained so much that I found familiar. I realised that I was working alongside men who were related to those George Ewart Evans

had interviewed some 15 years earlier when researching the book.

My collection of Ewart Evans works is all well-thumbed and all now live on the bookshelves behind my desk. Once I met Evans, when he was the speaker at, I think a Young Farmers event, in Norfolk. He signed a copy of *Ask the Fellows* for me. This is a book I will never part with, however much I am offered.

Later, I discovered more connections. I realised that his wife was the Mrs Evans who had taught me at Needham Market Primary School in the early 1960s. She had been a Quaker and perhaps it was a seed she had unknowingly sown, that led me to become a Quaker myself years later. On Sunday mornings, I can be found at Leiston's Quaker Meeting House, where 75 years ago, she had also been a member. I had always talked of writing a book about Evans, but never quite found

“ The main components of history are not things but people ”

George Ewart Evans

time and it had remained an unfulfilled ambition. He'd written an autobiography *The Strength of the Hills* and South Wales academic Gareth Williams had written a biography. Was there room for another book about Evans I wondered? Then, with retirement age fast approaching I signed up for the UEA's Creative Writing MA course, which gave me the time and the inspiration I needed.

It was while reading Primo Levi's *The Periodic Table*, that the penny dropped. Each chapter of Levi's book was structured around a different element. This gave him a series of themes through which he told the sometimes-horrific story of his past, growing up a Jew in pre-war Germany and surviving 11 months in Auschwitz. Could my book about Evans follow a similar format, with each chapter focused on something as familiar today as it was 150 years ago? I started with milk, because that is how life starts too. One of George Ewart Evans's boyhood chores was to milk the family cow after his older brother was called up in 1918 to fight on the Western Front, and decades later he contracted TB from milk delivered to his door by Blaxhall's milkman. Milk then, in the early 1950s was not pasteurised, but bottled on the farm and delivered to the surrounding villages. Researching the book took me to meet dairy farmers who today are returning to ways those Evans interviewed would have recognised, for example not using fertiliser, and selling unpasteurised milk to discerning consumers. The difference being that to sell raw milk today, your cows have to be tested regularly for brucellosis and TB.



Top  
Bob Scarce and  
Albert Wickets  
Richardson  
- The Ship Inn at  
Blaxhall in 1953

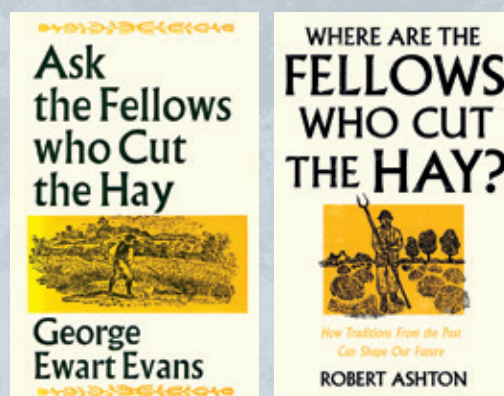
Bottom  
Step dancing,  
Blaxhall The Ship  
Inn 1953

Other chapters included wheat, barley, coal and steam, and each started with some of the stories Evans had collected, told by people born around 150 years ago, ventured into my own past working on farms 50 years ago, ending with examples of people bringing back old ways. A village blacksmith was one, and farmer bringing sheep back to Clare, a town that was at the very centre of the mediaeval wool trade. I met and interviewed old folk who remembered when Evans had lived in Blaxhall, and grandchildren of those he had interviewed.

Two central characters in *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay* were retired shepherd Robert Savage and his wife Priscilla. They'd been neighbours of the Evans and it was chatting with them over the garden fence that had prompted Evans to become an oral historian. A classics degree meant that he realised that dialect words Savage was using to describe his time as a shepherd dated back to Chaucer's time. Perhaps this was not surprising as he was the fifth or sixth generation in his family to be a shepherd. His son Russell was shepherd on Blackheath Estate where I worked, but Russell's son Ivan broke the tradition, left shepherding and built a very successful company selling and installing grain handling equipment.

I encountered several examples where social mobility meant people had not followed their parents into either farm work or domestic service, but gone to university and taken jobs their predecessors could not have imagined ever doing. It made me very aware of the importance of capturing the stories old people can tell, before

they are lost for ever. But I was equally aware that writers have for centuries felt they were witnessing change that would for ever be lost if they did not write it down.



My book *Where are the Fellows who Cut the Hay* was published earlier this month (April). The cover design deliberately mirrors that of the first edition of Evans's book, because I like to think I have added to the work he did, drawing material from all 12 of his books about rural life, and illustrating for my readers how rural life continues to evolve, and in some ways, is turning full circle as we slowly rediscover the sense of community, and connection with the soil and seasons that was for many years almost lost.

I found clear signs that as we move away from a century of excess, we're rediscovering what it means to belong, to be part of a community, and to have a life that extends beyond digital interaction. You can find the book in, as they say, all good bookshops.

*Editor's notes: George Ewart Evans' life and works feature as a permanent exhibition at The Food Museum (formerly the Museum of East Anglian Life) in Stowmarket, Suffolk.*

# Where are the Fellows who Cut the Hay?

## Blaxhall's Blue Plaque Bid

While researching this book Robert Ashton discovered that there is no blue plaque marking the place where George Ewart Evans wrote *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay*, the book for which he is best remembered.

There is already a blue plaque on the shop in South Wales where Evans was born, and another on the house at Needham Market which he moved to from Blaxhall.

With the help of Blaxhall's Parish Council and churchwarden, Robert launched a crowdfunding campaign to fund a blue plaque commemorating Evans's links with Blaxhall.

A celebratory event is scheduled to take place in Blaxhall on Sunday 7th April when the new blue plaque will be unveiled. The SPS is pleased to have supported this project.



Of the Blaxhall countryman, Evans wrote:

“ His knowledge is not a personal knowledge but has been available to him through oral tradition which is the unselfconscious medium of transmission. It is in his bones, you could say, and nonetheless valuable for that.... It was here at this time, and with the dressing and elaborating on it later, that I transposed the Blaxhall community in my own mind into its true place in an ancient historical sequence, keeping the continuity that was for ever changing, and for ever remaining the same, until an irreparable break substituted the machines for animal power, and put an end to a period that had lasted well over two thousand years. ”

*The Crooked Scythe*, pp.197-198



# Suffolk Spotlight

A roundup of local people who are actively engaged in working towards protecting, interpreting and promoting our unique built and natural heritage.

## THE SUFFOLK HEDGEROW HEROES CAMPAIGN FINISHES ON A HIGH

An update by Fiona Wells  
*Stour Valley Farmer Cluster*

The Suffolk Preservation Society, working in partnership with the Stour Valley Farmer Cluster and Dedham Vale National Landscape volunteers, is delighted to announce the completion of three years of work through the national Hedgerow Heroes grant programme.

Hedgerow Heroes is a national CPRE initiative that evolved alongside their influential #40by50 campaign lobbying government to take action. The campaign resulted in the government announcement as part of the 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan that a target has been set to create / restore 45,000 miles of hedgerow by 2050.

Alongside this campaign, CPRE found an enthusiastic private funder to support a project. Phase 1 of the Hedgerow Heroes Project started in 2021 with seven county CPRE groups, Suffolk being one of the first into the project.

Realising that project delivery could be more effective working in partnership, SPS teamed up with the Stour Valley Farmer Cluster who already had a close working relationship with the team in the Dedham Vale National

Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Surveying hedge condition and opportunities for new planting across the project area was one of the first tasks. A small team of volunteers quickly identified that a survey app that could be supported on a mobile phone was the best way forward and developed this from scratch. Survey maps produced were then available for the farmer to review and identify appropriate action that could be supported through Hedgerow Heroes grant funding.

Successful project bids each year since 2021 have enabled the Suffolk Hedgerow Heroes partnership to deliver just shy of 10,000m of hedge planting and 8,000m of hedge restoration across farms in the Dedham Vale (including in the north Essex area of the National Landscape). Planting has been undertaken by farmers themselves and a local contractor, helped by Dedham Vale and Greenlight Trust volunteers. Coppicing and conservation laying have been actioned by local contractors. A training day on improving the health of hedges through management has been delivered for farmers and volunteers, and volunteers have had a day learning conservation laying techniques.

Project volunteers have so far walked some 40kms surveying hedges with the surveys providing a fantastic data bank of future opportunities.



Volunteer hedge laying experience day March 22  
Wissington Grove Farm



Farmer Rob Dennis, with new hedge planted with help of volunteers alongside Green Lane Stratford St Mary

Taking this forward, the Stour Valley and Suffolk Wool Towns farmer cluster are working together with Suffolk Wildlife Trust on a Defra Landscape Recovery project. 'Enhancing and Connecting Habitats in Constable and Gainsborough Country' (EACH COG), the project area covers some 20,000 hectares of the south Suffolk and north Essex landscape.

EACH COG aims to enhance the management of SSSI and non-designated woodlands and improve connectivity between sites – through hedgerow restoration and creation, and creation and enhancement of other habitats for wildlife corridors. These areas support several of our most vulnerable species including nightingale, turtle dove and hazel dormouse alongside insects, reptiles and amphibians. This will be alongside management of deer at the landscape scale and supporting farm businesses in their land management and sustainability plans and drive towards Net Zero.

Further updates will be provided as the project develops!

Continued on page 14 >



Janina representing Birketts & Mia from national CPRE Wormingford Jan 24

# Suffolk Spotlight

## AN EXCITING NEW FUND TO BOOST LANDSCAPE QUALITY IN EAST SUFFOLK

**Paula Bartholomew**

*National Landscape Enhancement Officer*

We are told that Sizewell C will be the largest construction site in Europe, the scale of which many of us will never have witnessed before. Despite the computer-generated images, it is still hard to imagine how this vast development will sit in a landscape we know and cherish. Standing on the beach at Sizewell, with the picturesque fishing huts and cottages, vegetated shingle and the rolling waves of the North Sea, it's possible to imagine how it used to be, and it can still take some by surprise when they turn their back to the sea and take in the view of the structures of Sizewell A and B. Throughout the consultation for Sizewell C, it's always been recognised that the siting of a nuclear power station in a designated landscape would result in landscape and visual impacts over a wide area and some can't be mitigated. So, what can be done about these residual impacts?

Now that the official commencement of construction has begun, a fund provided by the developer will come into effect which aims to build resilience in the environment through enhancing landscape quality and supporting biodiversity. The Natural Environment Improvement Fund as it will be known, will be in place throughout the construction period, plus 3 years following completion and has a total value in the



View of Sizewell from Dunwich Beach © Gill Moon

region of £10 million. The fund will operate in a similar way to other grant schemes with decisions on the allocation of funding being made by an Awards Panel.

Residual impacts by their nature can be difficult to fully address, but the intention is that the fund will unlock opportunities for improving the quality of the landscape, making better connections between important habitats and ensuring that those habitats are well managed in the long term to support biodiversity and contribute to nature recovery. Conserving and supporting cultural heritage is recognised too, and communities are encouraged to get involved.

The eligible area for projects extends to some 600 square kilometres within the administrative area of East Suffolk and encompasses much of the National Landscape and Heritage Coast.

Famed for its shingle beaches, picturesque coastal towns, extensive heathlands, productive agriculture and forestry as well as exceptional nature reserves, there will be many excellent opportunities for collaborative landscape scale projects.

The Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape team (the new brand name for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across the country) are pleased to be hosting a Project Officer, fully funded by Sizewell C Ltd to advise and support applicants to make the most of this opportunity. The application guidance is currently being prepared and news of when the fund opens for applications will be widely publicised. Keep an eye on the National Landscapes website for news:

[coastandheaths-nl.org.uk/news](https://coastandheaths-nl.org.uk/news)



View of Sizewell from Dunwich Heath Landscape Lens

## IPSWICH SOCIETY

Mike Cook

In last Spring's edition of Suffolk View, I made a very down beat report on the future of The Broomhill Open Air Pool; success was on the doorstep in March 2020 as we were setting up the refurbishment contracts, COVID-19 struck, all bets were off.

Construction costs were up by 30% and our operator lessee business was facing financial problems. So, I appealed desperately for funds. Just over three years later, the increased costs, now approaching £10m have been met by a much-increased grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Ipswich Borough Council and Fusion-Lifestyle, the operator. A fresh planning application has already been submitted and will be dealt with expeditiously. The intention is to complete the refurbishment of the Pool, the Buffet, the entrance block with a reinstated clock tower, changing rooms as well as a new build of a gym and wellness centre for the Grand Gala Opening in the Spring of 2026. Once again, after over twenty years, victory is in sight. Fingers crossed.

Associated British Ports, the publicly quoted owner of Ipswich docks hired Legal and General Developers to develop a large part of the island for residential use, for which it is zoned in the Ipswich Local Plan. The proposal was for two blocks of modular houses, totalling 177 dwellings, separated by the Harbour Master's Office. Note that the Local Plan aimed at over 400 dwellings. Meanwhile, Ipswich Borough Council and The Ipswich Maritime Trust are negotiating with Historic England to have the original cottages, the harbour master's office and an original warehouse listed. It's going to be hard to stop ABP developing the island into a large apartment block.

Arras Square was created as a new public space around St Stephen's Church, the Buttermarket Centre and the rear of The Ancient House in the eighties. The use of the church has been changed from the Tourist Information Centre to a popular music centre but the infrastructure is run down and leads to an area of undesirable behaviour. Long awaited proposals by the Council are comprehensive and include decluttering of existing street furniture and installing new street furniture and benches, including a concrete stair and ramp with integrated seating and planting. It also includes removal of 10 yew trees and

the boundary wall, and repairs to the sarcophagi on the east side.

Some of the proposals have aroused criticism. But it will be a huge improvement by getting rid of virtually every car, improving the paving and making it lighter.



The former Coop on Carr Street, shut for a decade is to be demolished and replaced by a much needed Primary School. The mosaic on the rear of the building was listed grade II at the end of March 2023. As part of the evaluation of options an independent consultant has recommended that it will be necessary to carry out an asbestos survey. There is a risk that asbestos fibres were incorporated within the render and any recent resin or mastic repairs could also be at risk of contamination. Given the potential threat to human health during works to remove the mural, further exploration is needed and for mitigation options to be determined. The Twentieth Century Society is visiting the site in September.

## SUDBURY SOCIETY

Angie Bentley

The Sudbury Society senses that as we move forward in 2024 there will be major changes in our work and in the focus of our activities. We are already seeing changes being made and planned because of severe budgetary cutbacks affecting all areas of our local authorities' expenditure including support for all types of local organizations, art galleries, cultural centres etc. If we don't react speedily and work to ensure these facilities are able to continue, we will have lost an important part of what makes our communities vital and successful. We have been fortunate in Sudbury to have had the relaunch of the new Gainsborough Gallery and Sudbury Arts Centre at St Peters in recent times - a really important



part of the role of our civic societies is supporting these and other local venues for the benefit of all.

A large part of our work remains monitoring planning applications and especially those that impact both listed and non-listed heritage assets. Since our last article for Suffolk View in 2021 highlighting the plight of 4 local buildings, we are sad to report that the only positive progress made is that some roofing work has started at Victoria Hall, which we suspect may be to protect the planning approval. Belle Vue House is currently back on the open market after a rollercoaster series of bizarre events and remains at risk of demolition. 48 North Street is unsecured at the time of writing and looks to be gradually collapsing, to which the Council's only response is that they will issue an 'untidy site' warning rather than any effective enforcement against the irresponsible owners.

Several years ago the Society produced a Buildings at Risk Register with the aim of highlighting significant buildings that were of concern to us and this now appears on our website – [sudburysociety.org.uk](http://sudburysociety.org.uk) We are pleased to report that three of the original buildings have seen dramatic progress, namely 2 King Street, the former dairy in Weavers Lane and the former makers workshop (known locally as the Doll's House) in Friars Street. These buildings have all been acquired by new private owners who have proved their saviours. If only a similar chance could be found for other grand old properties like 48 North Street.

The whole planning process is changing and we have to be sure we adapt to ensure we keep our local authorities on course to protect our community's heritage and facilities. We should not have to listen to their explanation that budgetary cuts have to be made at a time when their own expenditure is continuing to rise with staff wages coupled to administration cuts.

*Top*  
Harvest mural on the former Coop building  
Image: Bob Kindred

*Bottom*  
The former makers workshop (the Doll's House)



Bethany Philbedge

Planning Officer, Suffolk Preservation Society

# Planning Overview

Update and comment on local planning issues

For details on all SPS's planning campaign work, see our monthly bulletins available on our website at

[suffolksociety.org/campaign-bulletins](https://suffolksociety.org/campaign-bulletins)

## SUFFOLK'S NEW NATIONAL LANDSCAPES

Since November, our much loved 'Areas of Natural Beauty', the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB and the Dedham Vale AONB have been rebranded as 'National Landscapes'. Suffolk's two AONBs are now known as the 'Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape' and the 'Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley'. Following recommendations in the Glover Review, Defra funded the National Landscape Association to look at how best to achieve the Review's aims. It was decided that renaming the designation as National Landscapes will unite 'the AONB family' with national strength and local relevance, and make the brand more recognisable and easier to understand (by removing the acronym).

The renaming has been accompanied by new visual branding. It is hoped that a more coherent nationwide approach will result in the designation being more widely recognised by the public.

In December 2023, the new duty came into force, through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which now requires all 'relevant authorities' to 'seek to further the purposes' of the designated landscape. For National Landscapes, this purpose is the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty, and the new duty overrides and strengthens the previous duty to 'have regard' to

these purposes. In effect this means local authorities will be looking to planning applications within a NL to benefit the special qualities of the area, such as tranquillity, dark skies and cultural heritage.



**Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape**



**Dedham Vale National Landscape & Stour Valley**

## PIN POINTING THE CENTRE OF SUFFOLK

In January an oak sapling to honour the King's coronation was planted at the centre point of Suffolk. In 2023, the Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk, the Countess of Euston, who is also the Patron of the Suffolk Preservation Society, received a commemorative plaque from Buckingham Palace and decided that it should be placed at the heart of Suffolk.

This led to a project to determine where exactly the geographical centre of the county lies. Careful calculations led Dr Mark Bowler of University of Suffolk to the conclusion that this is just west of the aptly named Middlewood Green, a hamlet a few miles north-east of Stowmarket. It is fitting that this work was carried out in 2024 which marks the 50th anniversary of the changing administrative boundary of Suffolk.

The Lord Lieutenant, who is the King's representative in the county, attended the event in January to help plant the oak sapling which had been specifically

selected by Gary Battell, Woodland Advisor to Suffolk County Council, and SPS Heritage Champion (see page 6) from Windsor Great Park.



© Oliver Paul / Google



## VALUED LANDSCAPES – BLIGHTED BY COMMERCIAL SOLAR FARMS?

A seemingly endless number of commercially scaled solar proposals continues to be brought to our attention. We are particularly concerned that we are responding to more and more applications which affect Valued Landscapes and are on highly graded agricultural land. 'Valued Landscape' is a local designation which should benefit from enhanced protection of their special qualities. SPS consistently calls for solar developments to be located on rooftops, previously developed land and, where greenfield sites are justified, on lower quality agricultural land.

SPS has objected to a number of recent applications for solar farms within Valued Landscapes. These include a 40MW solar at **Bentley**, within the Coast and Heaths National Landscape Additional Project Area, defined in the local plan as a Valued Landscape.

The site is in an isolated location within the wider setting of the medieval parish church and, in planning policy terms it is important to recognise and seek to protect its special qualities of tranquillity and landscape character.

We also objected to a scheme at **Wissett** in a landscape also identified as being a Valued



The rolling topography of land around Boxted Hall

Landscape particularly sensitive to change. The site is a deeply rural, settled and tranquil ancient landscape, distinctive by virtue of its hedgerows, veteran trees and listed buildings. The area has a strongly unified landscape pattern with a sense of tranquillity which we think will be fundamentally harmed by these proposals.

Meanwhile, the site for a solar farm application at **Boxted** is within the Project

Area of the Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley. Immediately adjacent are several blocks of mature woodland, including areas of Ancient Woodland. The proposals will harm the visual qualities of this sensitive landscape and the significance of nearby designated heritage assets. Moreover, due to the rolling topography and the valley side location, these impacts are not capable of effective mitigation.

## MAKING OUR LISTED BUILDINGS READY FOR THE FUTURE?

Having delivered our training workshop in November on energy efficiency in old buildings (see report on page 26), we were pleased to be consulted by Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils on their plans to speed up the consenting process for approving energy efficiency improvements affecting listed buildings. Currently, property owners must apply for listed building consent to make certain changes to their buildings, slowing the



Kensington and Chelsea © Shutterstock

process of installing worthwhile energy saving additions. The councils are exploring whether they could become the first rural council to introduce a Local Listed Building Consent Order (LLBCO) to streamline the process. We recognise the importance of improving the energy efficiency of Suffolk's historic building stock. We also understand that the consent process can be slow and frustrating at times. However, the enormous number and variety of listed buildings in the district does not naturally lend itself to this method of control and we have registered our specific concerns about the proposed loosening of existing controls.

In 2022, an LLBCO was issued in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, related to the installation of solar panels, soon to be extended to cover secondary and double glazing. A significant proportion of the listed buildings in the Borough are 19th century terraces of townhouses. In the same year, Maldon District Council granted an LLBCO for Woodfield Cottages, a small settlement of industrial single-storey terraced cottages developed for the workforce of the Bentall Agricultural Works.

In both these cases, the local authorities were receiving multiple listed building applications for alterations of a similar nature. The LLBCO enabled criteria to be set that could easily be applied to all of these buildings owing to their similarity. In the case of Woodfield Cottages, for example, detailed drawings for replacement doors for use across all the properties were covered by the LLBCO.

However, in Suffolk it is not quite so straightforward. Our listed building stock includes buildings from a wide range of periods and incorporates a diverse range of construction methods, design details and materials. So, while we support moves to remove unnecessary red tape around achieving energy saving measures, a district wide order that could be applied to all listed buildings will be challenging to implement. We have suggested that the planning authority begins by identifying groups of similar buildings and then begin with a single focus (e.g. windows) before including a broader range of energy saving works.

Continued on page 18 >

# Planning Overview

## GOVERNMENT PLANNING POLICY CHANGES

Since last autumn there has been a new crop of Government policy initiatives and primary legislation including the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). These will impact how the planning system shapes our county in a variety of ways; some may be good news for Suffolk.

The primary effect of the changes to the NPPF is to remove the presumption in favour of sustainable development (or “tilted balance”) for local authorities with up-to-date local plans, by not requiring them to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. This should reduce the number of planning permissions which would otherwise be granted due to the lack of housing land supply. On the other hand, the revised NPPF makes clear that the standard method for calculating housing need is a minimum starting point, encouraging developers to push for higher housing numbers regardless of the housing land supply position. Homes are considered to be a public benefit and their delivery carries significant weight in the planning balance for decision making.

The LURA also brings in much of interest to the Society from a heritage and design perspective, including a requirement for local planning authorities to adopt design codes for their entire authority area and a new duty requiring local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Registered Historic Gardens and their setting. Meanwhile a new paragraph in the NPPF requires local authorities, in determining planning applications, to give “significant weight” to the need to support “energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements”. The new guidance is clear, however, that heritage protection must be considered, as, where proposals would affect designated heritage assets, authorities should also apply the relevant heritage policies set out in detail in the NPPF.



*“He’s trying to figure out the government’s formula for calculating housing needs.”*

Other aspects of the Act will require a more comprehensive review of the NPPF and are expected to follow later this year (depending on the timing and outcome of the forthcoming general election). National Development Management Policies (NDMP) on issues that apply in most areas (such as general heritage protection) will be set out and will have the same weight as local plans in the decision-making process. These will cover specific issues, leaving the core of the planning system to be covered by the NPPF.

## MORE CHANGES TO PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RULES

Among a number of changes to permitted development rights, the Government has announced changes to support housing delivery by removing the limit to the floor space that can be converted from commercial to dwellings. We are pleased to see that restrictions remain in Conservation areas, National Landscapes and listed buildings, but outside these restrictions, office blocks of any size could now be converted to flats without planning permission. The risk of creating substandard accommodation with limited, or possibly no, amenity space is very real. A second announcement is designed to encourage more people to install solar panels on their homes and businesses through relaxed permitted development rights. SPS welcomes changes which will increase the amount of rooftop renewable energy generation, in line with CPRE’s

Rooftop Revolution campaign. However, any surge in uptake is likely to be limited as the change is restricted to flat roofs only. Solar panels on dwellings with pitched roofs will still require planning permission if the equipment protrudes over than 0.2 metres from the external surface or is higher than the top of the existing roof. Domestic solar panels also do not come under permitted development if the surface faces a highway, is on a listed building or is in a conservation area. However, a more encouraging impact of the change is to allow solar panels above car parks as

the changes will make it easier for panels to be installed on canopies above car parks if they are more than 10 metres away from people’s homes.



*“Please excuse the chaos, we’re in the process of changing over from office to residential.”*

## BUILDING ON OUR FRAGILE COAST

Back in 2016, the winning entry in SPS's 2016 Suffolk Beauty photographic competition was an image of the cottages at Eastern Bavents farm with barley ripening in the foreground. Following the continued and relentless annual retreat of the cliffs of 3 to 5 metres, these cottages, however, were demolished in 2020 after being declared unsafe. We were therefore interested by a recent planning application for new houses designed to be future proof and to replace three cottages lost in recent years through coastal erosion and one house likely to be lost within next 20 years. East Suffolk Council is currently considering proposals for four new dwellings in Easton Bavents which are designed to be demountable.

Although the site is some distance from the retreated coastline, the buildings are designed around a flat-pack timber construction system which can be taken apart, so that when the time comes, rather than demolishing an unsafe building, it can be deconstructed and moved to a new site. We also note that the houses are to be highly insulated and that renewable energy is to be generated on site through rooftop solar PV panels.

This is not the first time that a more innovative approach to design, which takes



Easton Bavents. Image: Juliet Blaxland

into account the retreating coast, has been taken in Easton Bavents. Following the demolition of a former Royal Navy listening station, two holiday units were created close to the cliff edge. The units, which were awarded an East Suffolk Quality of Place design award in 2019, are portable and constructed to allow them to be lifted and relocated further inland.

The sustainable approach to construction, outlined in the current application, is only

one of many considerations to be taken into account in the determination of this particular application, however. The proposals are for a greenfield site within the designated National Landscape and therefore issues surrounding the landscape impact, lighting and whether a suitable brownfield site may be preferable and available for the replacement dwellings, have all being raised. We continue to follow the application with interest.

“ Buildings are designed around a flat-pack timber construction system which can be taken apart, so that when the time comes, rather than demolishing an unsafe building, it can be deconstructed and moved to a new site ”

## ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION PROJECTS, A ROUND-UP

The Examination into the proposed **Bramford to Twinstead** transmission line reinforcement closed in mid-March. SPS's submissions to the Examination, which centred on our concerns over the impact on Hintlesham Hall, can be read via our website. Meanwhile the county and relevant district councils in Suffolk and Essex delivered an ultimatum to National Grid in early February – change or we will all move our response to “object”.

A joint written representation stated that the proposals for (inter alia) landscape and visual mitigation and compensation measures were inadequate and that these inadequacies were so profound that the Councils were considering moving to a position of formal objection. This was indeed the outcome and the Councils are

clearly not satisfied that any meaningful improvements to the proposals have been forthcoming. A formal Final Position Statement by Suffolk County council at the end of February states

*“SCC is so concerned about the shortcomings in the Applicant's proposals for the implementation and control of the construction of the project, that it must advise the ExA and the SoS that it formally OBJECTS to the making of a Development Consent Order”.*

The formal round of consultation into the proposed new **Norwich to Tilbury** transmission line is due to begin in April after the release of the National Grid ESO (Electricity Supply Operator) study into alternatives.

A second non-statutory consultation into the **LionLink** interconnector project, which will connect energy generated offshore to both the UK and the Netherlands via subsea cables, ended in November 2023. This included a proposed landfall at Walberswick, SPS submitted a robust objection to the proposal. Meanwhile a consultation into **Sealink** - a proposed 2 gigawatt predominantly offshore, cable link between Suffolk and Kent, ended before Christmas. SPS responded to the consultation on this project which currently proposes landfall between Thorpeness and Aldeburgh with connection to the grid at Friston and a converter station at Saxmundham.

# New Landscapes of Power

## GREENING THE GREAT GRID UPGRADE

A joint report has been commissioned by SPS, Norfolk and Essex CPRE to examine how the great grid upgrade can boost net zero while ensuring that impacted communities are afforded proper representation, mitigations and benefits

Many readers will be aware of the 'Great Grid Upgrade' - National Grid's long-term programme to create a decarbonised transmission system from the new - mainly offshore or coastal - energy generation sources to businesses and households across the country.

The focus of the programme will be on 12 new offshore and onshore transmission projects over the next ten years, but also the modernisation of existing infrastructure.

From an East Anglian perspective, the most salient new line is that proposed between Norwich and Tilbury.

From a Suffolk-specific vantage point, proposals such as this need to be considered as part of a growing accumulation of energy-related infrastructure, including numerous substations and actual or proposed solar farms hosted within the county, especially along its coast and, of course, Sizewell C.

Whilst the Suffolk Preservation Society applauds the strategic intent behind the 'Great Grid Upgrade' - i.e to accelerate the country's shift to net zero and consolidate our energy security, we are deeply

concerned about the pace and impacts of what is being proposed.

Joining together with the Essex and Norfolk branches of the CPRE, we therefore decided to commission an independent report into the 'Great Grid Upgrade' and its impacts on our region in order to give us individually and collectively a clear, holistic and strategic response that goes beyond any one proposed scheme.

The report has been written by Dr. Andy Tickle, a freelance campaign and policy adviser with over 30 years' frontline environmental leadership experience, including two decades in senior roles at Friends of the Peak district and the CPRE. Titled 'Greening the Great Grid Upgrade', Dr. Tickle's report provides a detailed critique as to the programme's strengths and weaknesses and how it might be improved in ways designed to boost net zero outcomes and ensure that impacted communities are afforded proper representation, mitigations and benefits.

We believe that it is an important piece of research that will allow the Society and others to push for key changes from both



Community engagement is central to achieving social licence

National Grid and the Government.

The report evidences that without a new and improved form of 'national conversation' about where and how the new electricity transmission infrastructure is located and the manner in which this is decided, "then the social licence required for the upgrade will be absent or insufficient."

Dr. Tickle argues that this can only be delivered through the development of a more holistic set of solutions, the use of more innovative technique (yes - including offshore solutions!) and an ambition to reduce environmental impacts to an absolute minimum.

This will require further Government rowing back on some of its policies and strategies announced in November's Autumn Statement which essentially will result in the fast tracking of consent, rather than our proposals for a 'front-loaded' strategic scale planning and design process.

In effect, we are arguing for a 'make haste slowly approach' that doesn't result in protracted and expensive legal challenges for each and every element of the new infrastructure.



Electrical pylons  
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Dr. Tickle's report provides us and other campaign groups with more precise 'asks' as to what this approach should look like. These include:

- 1 Need and the risk of overbuild** - The Future Energy Scenario must be revised to include much greater ambition for distributed energy and flexibility to avoid overprediction of energy need and grid system overbuild.
- 2 Halt work on the Norwich to Tilbury scheme** - This highly damaging scheme should now be paused for review whilst need timings and alternative solutions are investigated more thoroughly. An offshore solution (a second subsea link) is strongly preferred to the proposed overhead line.
- 3 Better strategic planning** - The Centralised Strategic Network Plan must frontload more rigorous environmental assessments to provide a more holistic analysis of onshore and offshore options. To provide better balancing of environmental and community constraints, the CSNP must be opened up to inputs from wider stakeholders.
- 4 Deliver enhanced offshore integration for East Anglia** - The early opportunities coordination model should be replicated for more schemes so that offshore grid connections are maximised.
- 5 Deliver a new 'great green grid'** - Better solutions, including undergrounding, the provision of environmental net gain, and earlier and more meaningful participation – through design panels and community forums – increase social consent and speed up consenting.
- 6 Implement a more participative approach to community engagement** - National Grid or government to develop a socially-just, transparent and flexible community benefits policy that prioritises sustainability goals (including energy transition) and community and environmental betterment. Community benefit funds to be properly resourced and run, using experienced independent facilitators.

Perhaps the most important recommendation is that we need to start a new national conversation about energy infrastructure, place-making and the role of planning for net zero. The immediate need is to address the short-term changes required to green the 'great grid upgrade' in East Anglia but we also recommend wider reflection on how better planning for net zero can be put in motion.

The Suffolk Preservation Society welcomes this report and endorses its main findings. We are looking to engage with National Grid, Government agencies and local and national partners to ensure that the 'Great Grid Upgrade' is as green and community-focussed as possible and not a strategic missed opportunity for generations to come.

The full report will be published once finalised and will be available to read via the SPS website.

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Off-shore windfarm  
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*Middle*  
Rooftop solar array  
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*Bottom*  
High voltage  
converter station  
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# General Election Manifesto – SPS's asks

## A county faithful to the past - fit for the future

As readers will be aware, a General Election will be held this year. We therefore see this as an opportunity to influence the direction of the new government representatives on key environmental matters that are important to our members. At time of writing, it remains unclear when the election will be held, but nevertheless, we've been working

hard on our manifesto asks about what we'd like to see from our Parliamentary representatives, both now and over the next five years.

Recalling that the Society's core purpose is to protect and enhance Suffolk's heritage and unique landscape to ensure that development is compatible and undertaken sympathetically and

sustainably, we are calling on all political parties and Parliamentary candidates in the county to support three key policy platforms that recognise the irreplaceable nature of our buildings and landscapes, but which also ensure our county's sustainable future. These have drawn on the principles and themes in **A Manifesto for Suffolk** – our ten year-plan.

## Our Heritage for all generations

The historic environment gives people and communities a strong sense of identity and a pride in place. It attracts visitors, providing income for businesses and employment for Suffolk's people.

We are looking for the next Government to:

- **Put heritage at the heart of policy and decision making**, investing in and empowering councils and communities so they can protect and make the most of their heritage
- **Embed the historic environment in its net zero strategies** by bringing forward skills training, funding and advice in a National Retrofit Strategy covering listed and traditionally constructed buildings
- **Reform the tax regime to promote long-term sustainable growth** by equalising VAT on repair and maintenance of listed buildings with new build

## New Landscapes of Power

The Society calls upon the Government to deliver both energy security and its net zero ambitions but without sacrificing Suffolk's landscapes, heritage and communities.

We are looking for the next Government to:

- **Develop a co-ordinated and strategic approach** to energy Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects that minimises harmful impacts on our countryside and communities
- **Accelerate the rollout of rooftop renewables** on buildings, car park canopies and similar structures to protect high quality food producing land and valued landscapes from commercial scale solar farms
- **Tighten criteria for large-scale commercial solar farms**, prioritising brownfield sites and avoiding harm to landscapes and the setting of designated heritage assets

## A Planning system fit for the Future

We will only be able to protect our countryside for future generations whilst facing the climate and housing crises, and energy and food security, if there is a clear plan for what to put where.

We are looking for the next Government to:

- **Deliver a brownfield first** land use policy, to protect our countryside, locating new homes and businesses close to transport links, services and facilities
- **Ensure higher design standards** are adhered to by all stakeholders, as required by national planning guidance
- **Achieve more meaningful community engagement** throughout the planning process through a strengthening of national planning policy

# SPS CIO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk Preservation Society CIO to be held on **14th June 2024**; registration at **6.00pm** for **6.30pm** start, at **Little Hall, Lavenham, CO10 9QZ** for the following purposes:

## AGENDA

- 1 Welcome;
- 2 Apologies for absence;
- 3 President's address;
- 4 Chairman's address;
- 5 Approve draft minutes of the 2023 AGM;
- 6 Trustees' Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023;
- 7 Thanks and appreciation to those Trustees who are resigning;
- 8 To re-elect those Trustees who are retiring by rotation in accordance with the CIO Constitution;
- 9 To elect Trustees who have been co-opted during the year by the CIO Trustees in accordance with the Constitution;
- 10 To re-appoint a registered auditor to the CIO, to hold office until the conclusion of the next general meeting when accounts are laid before the meeting;
- 11 Director's report;
- 12 Members' questions to the Director and Trustees.

The CIO accounts ended 31st December 2023 will be made available on the website and at the AGM. A personal profile of the proposed Trustees offering themselves for election will be on the website and available at the AGM. Copies of the 2023 AGM minutes will be available at the AGM. AGM papers will not be mailed out to Members unless requested. The AGM is taking place at our summer garden party.

To inform us of your attendance at the AGM and to book your place at the Garden Party; please register via the SPS website or contact the SPS office - 01787 247179 or [sps@suffolksociety.org](mailto:sps@suffolksociety.org).

## FORM OF PROXY

for use at the Annual General Meeting to be held on Friday, 14th June 2024 in accordance with the Notice of Meeting

**To be valid, this form of proxy must be signed by the Member and received at the registered office of the CIO at least 72 hours prior to the commencement of the meeting**

I/we the undersigned, being a Member/Members of Suffolk Preservation Society CIO, hereby appoint the Chairman of the meeting or the person hereby named as my/our proxy to attend, speak and vote in respect of my/our voting entitlement at the AGM of the CIO as set out in the Notice of Meeting:

Resolutions:	FOR	AGAINST	VOTE WITHHELD
1. Apologies for absence			
2. To receive the Statement of Accounts			
3. To receive the Trustees' Annual Report			
4. To re-elect those Trustees who are retiring by rotation			
5. To elect Trustees who have been co-opted during the year			
6. To re-appoint an Auditor to hold office until the conclusion of the next AGM			

Name of Member:

Signature of Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# SPS Events



## A WALK AND TALK IN THE ANCIENT WOODLANDS OF STAVERTON PARK

WANTISDEN, WOODBRIDGE, IP12 3PJ

We will be led by Gary Battell, Suffolk County Council Woodland Advisor. Join us to learn about this unique woodland which is of great historical and conservation interest.

Following the walk, a light lunch will be served at the Shepherds Cottage, located on the edge of the forest and part of the Staverton Estate.

Thanks to SPS Trustee, Nicholas Pearson OBE, who has kindly agreed to sponsor the event, and the Kemball family for allowing access to the forest.

Wednesday 8th May  
10.30am  
£20 per person



## SPS ANNUAL GARDEN PARTY AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

LITTLE HALL, LAVENHAM, CO10 9QZ

All Members are welcome to join us for a summer's evening in one of Suffolk's loveliest medieval walled gardens.

This is a free event but donations are encouraged.

For catering purposes, please book your place via the SPS website or contact the SPS office.

Friday 14th June  
6.30pm registration  
FREE



## SUMMER EVENT AND HERITAGE CHAMPION AWARDS CEREMONY

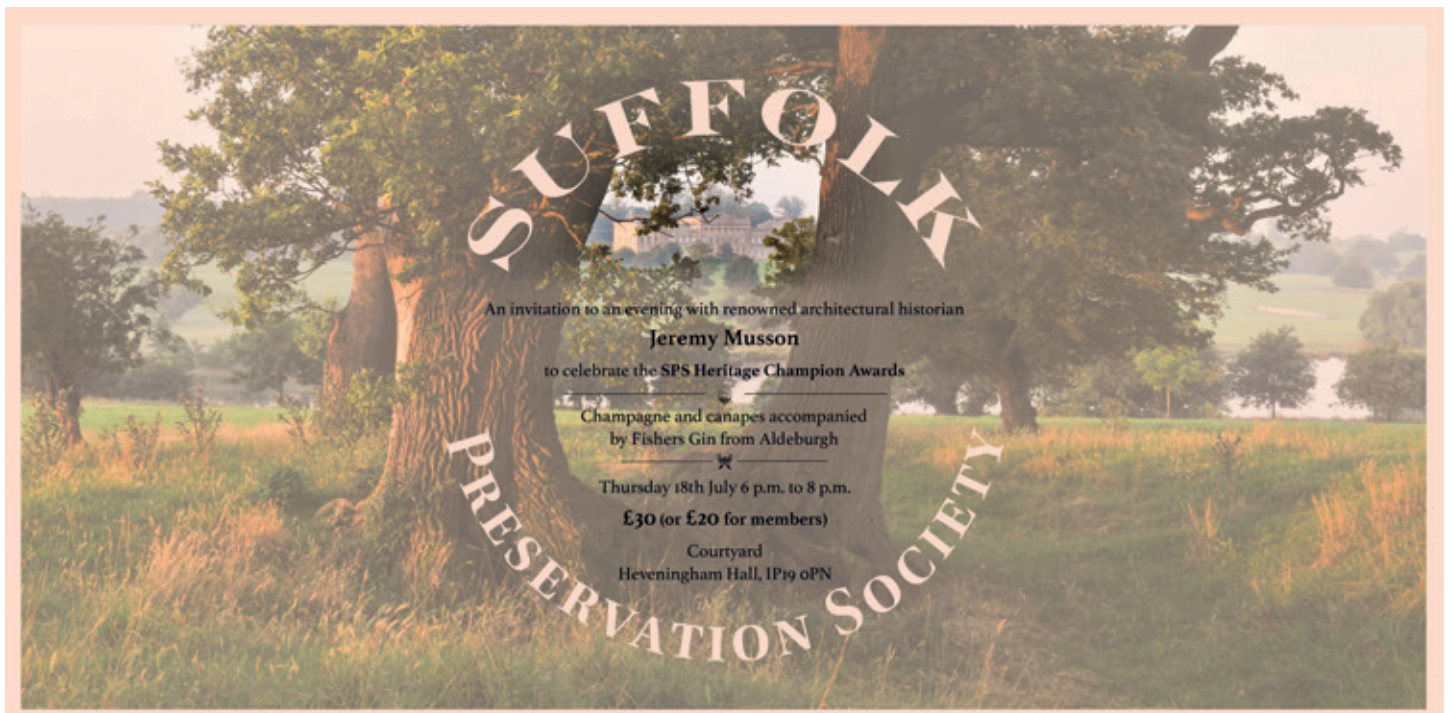
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Our speaker for the evening is renowned architectural historian, Jeremy Musson. Jeremy is a regular contributor to *Country Life* and other journals, as well as a former National Trust curator. He is author and co-editor of numerous books on historic houses and related subjects, and wrote and presented the BBC TV series *A Curious House Guest*. He currently lectures in the department of architecture and history of art at the University of Cambridge.

The evening will include the presentation to the SPS Heritage Champion Award winners.

Thursday 18th July  
6.00pm  
£20 Members  
£30 Non-members

Further details on all our events and how to book your place is available on our website, or contact the office on [sps@suffolksociety.org](mailto:sps@suffolksociety.org)



## A REVIEW OF THE SPS CONFERENCE ON RETROFITTING FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN OLD BUILDINGS

**Simon Sturgis SPS Trustee AADip RIBA**  
 ‘Retrofit’ implies improving a building so that it performs to current environmental standards. This is not just a bureaucratic requirement, it is important as retrofit helps ensure that the building fabric (external walls, roof, floor) are protected from condensation and water ingress leading to deterioration. It also ensures the comfort and health of the occupier and helps to reduce energy bills. The challenges around retrofit include the cost and the inconvenience of doing it. It can also, for many older or listed buildings, be difficult in terms of the practicalities of how it is achieved. However failure to retrofit historic buildings leads to fabric deterioration, obsolescence, loss of value and ultimately demolition.

Buildings require Environmental Performance Certificates (EPC’s). The rules are getting ever more stringent. At the moment you must have a valid EPC to sell your house, although there is no specific level you need to achieve. This is almost certain to change over the next few years as the government updates regulations in relation to the Net Zero legislation. Heat loss from older housing stock is something in which the UK lags behind Europe to a significant degree.



In terms of heat loss typically the problem is lack of insulation or from drafts through gaps in the fabric. This leads to much higher energy use and higher costs in older buildings (or misery!).

In November 2023 SPS held an ‘Energy Efficiency’ event in Haughley Barns to look, in detail, at the whole issue of retrofit of historic buildings and how to practically solve these problems. SPS partnered with Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and Historic England to deliver the event and the sell out audience of professionals, homeowners and community representatives demonstrated the growing interest and importance of this topic.

The experts in this field, Marianne Suhr and Roger Hunt gave extensive talks on retrofit of historic buildings. Both have published excellent guidance on this topic, both separately and together. See ‘*Old House Eco Handbook – A Practical Guide to Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency and Sustainability*’, a joint publication. In addition, Dan McNaughton the senior building services engineer from Historic England, talked about the mechanics of heating older buildings, involving for example, ground and air source heat pumps.

We also welcomed a number of stall holders who were able to display and discuss some of the materials and products required to maintain and improve our historic buildings.

What the event demonstrated was that all these issues are resolvable with the right advice. For example, despite well known concerns, heat pumps offer a very good solution provided they are correctly specified and installed.



Further, many of the fabric based solutions including insulation, double glazing etc can be entirely compatible with older or listed buildings. Further useful information is available from the LETI ‘*Climate Emergency Retrofit Guide*’.

The pressure to improve the environmental performance of older buildings is ratcheting up. This is however to all our benefits as it protects these buildings and provides us with more comfortable, affordable homes. It is also financially beneficial, research shows that there is both a rental and a value premium associated with dwellings that have improved environmental performance.

The Energy Efficiency workshop will be offered again in the Autumn, more details to follow.

The 2023 workshop was made possible thanks to the Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Fund, which was provided by Suffolk’s public sector organisations, as part of the wider work to address the climate emergency. Find out more about the Community Match Fund and the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan here: [www.greensuffolk.org](http://www.greensuffolk.org)



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Founded in 1929, the SPS Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1154806 is working to safeguard the buildings and landscape of Suffolk.


The views expressed in Suffolk View are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of SPS.

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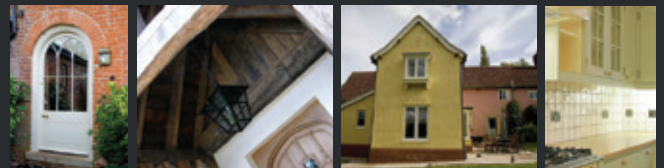


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