

Suffolk Coastal Resource Network

Report of the work undertaken by the Suffolk Coastal Resource Network

1st October 2008 - 30th September 2009

BACKGROUND:

The Suffolk Coastal Resource Network (SCRN) has been running since 2004 in different guises and formats. The development of the Network was triggered initially by the then Education and Skills subgroup of the Local Strategic Partnership and has now morphed into the Local Infrastructure Partnership operating in the district. The SCRN brings together a range of interested partners who deliver services to the voluntary and community sector in the district, both from the voluntary sector, local community and public sector at a district and county level. Through the SCRN, these organisations can come together to share ideas and best practice, deliver joint projects and ensure that there is a structured approach to 'infrastructure' services in the district.

Current membership:

- SAVO
- Suffolk ACRE
- Suffolk Coastal LSP (via the Co-ordinator and Board representatives)
- Suffolk County Council
- Young Suffolk
- Wickham Market Partnership
- Community Safety Partnership
- Long Shop Museum
- Suffolk Coastal District Council
- Suffolk Volunteering Federation
- Churches Together
- Framlingham Volunteer Centre
- Health Improvement (SCDC / NHS Suffolk)

PROJECT GOAL:

The objectives of the Suffolk Coastal Resource Network are as follows:

- To draw together key partners that work with the VCS to identify joint projects, share resources and information and seek funding for cross-cutting projects
- To provide information, training and resources to the VCS

- To support posts that impact on the work of key partners such as the VCS Development Co-ordinator and Volunteer Suffolk Coastal

FUNDER:

The SCRN puts forward projects to the Local Strategic Partnership that it feels are relevant to its work plan and objectives. At this moment in time the next round of the Performance Reward Grant is being bid for, with projects including the VCS Development Co-ordinator, Parish Planning and for Volunteer Suffolk Coastal.

Currently, funding for the post of the VCS Development Co-ordinator consists of continuation of funding from the Suffolk Coastal LSP, some core funds from SAVO's Partnership Team and smaller grants from the Port Authority and BASIS projects.

The Volunteer Suffolk Coastal worker is currently funded by Suffolk County Council and some legacy funding for outreach work in Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham via the Framlingham Volunteer Centre.

WORK OF KEY STAFF:

The **VCS Development Co-ordinator** is employed by SAVO to work 15 hours a week. The post is line-managed by the Partnership Manager at SAVO, but reports directly to the SCRN, which manages their work programme.

Under the broad objectives of the SCRN, the work of the VCS Development Co-ordinator has four specific objectives:

- To run funding and development surgeries on a regular basis through the district
- To provide networking lunches and support consultant events
- To offer health checks to VCS organisations
- To act a conduit for information to and from the VCS

This work also dovetails with other Local Infrastructure Partners around the county such as ICVS, Mid Suffolk Action in Partnership, Waveney Community Forum, Babergh Communities Together and the West Suffolk Consortium for Voluntary Organisations. Together these 6 Local Infrastructure Partners have successfully bid for BASIS funding from the Big Lottery to employ 2 works to be shared across the county. These are the Partnership Officer and Marketing and Communications Officer, based at Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre and ICVS respectively. Both officers contribute to support the projects undertaken by the Suffolk Coastal Resource Network wherever value can be added. For example, the Marketing and Communications officer designed the booklet 'Starting and Running a Voluntary or Community Group', which was piloted in Coastal and then rolled out across the county.

The **Volunteer Suffolk Coastal worker** is a new post, identified through the work of the SCRN as a solution to a locality gap in the provision of volunteering brokerage in the district.

The aim of Volunteer Suffolk Coastal is to increase the volunteering opportunities for the residents in Suffolk Coastal, enabling them contribute to the wellbeing of themselves, their communities and the wider society. Building on the success of Framlingham Volunteer Centre, Volunteer Suffolk Coastal is extending volunteering across the rest of the district, focusing on the recruitment of volunteers, placing them in meaningful volunteering opportunities and offering them continuing support in their endeavours.

Volunteer Suffolk Coastal will work closely with voluntary and community organisations and groups to ascertain their need for volunteers and to develop suitable opportunities to fulfil their requirements. This recruitment will focus on older people, young people and for the environment but not exclusively so in order that the value of volunteering is promoted across all communities - geographical, thematic and communities of interest

The market towns in the district have an important role as centres for services and Volunteer Suffolk Coastal will seek to place a volunteer recruitment presence in Saxmundham, Leiston, Woodbridge and Wickham Market and eventually to place outreach services in other parishes.

It is also planned to have a presence to enhance the work of Felixstowe Volunteer Centre as parts of Felixstowe (and similarly Saxmundham and Leiston) have significant levels of deprivation.

A volunteer development outreach presence will commence in Felixstowe in September, Leiston and Saxmundham in October and Woodbridge and Wickham Market in November. Work has already started in identifying and visiting voluntary and community organisations that involve or wish to involve volunteers in their work with the outcome of establishing close partnership working relationships.

It is expected that the project will recruit some 50 volunteers in the period September 2009 - March 2010 and a further 100 in the following year. It is also expected that partnership working will be established with 75 volunteer involving organisations.

EVALUATION AGAINST THE CURRENT WORKPLAN:

OBJECTIVE A: INCREASE CAPACITY AND QUALITY OF VCS GROUPS		
A1:	MAP VCS GROUPS AND CAPACITY NEEDS:	<p>Database:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous updating and development - currently over 650 groups indentified. <p>Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual groups health checked at consultations • 100+ VCS groups' identified through evaluation and mini-workshops at 4 Networking lunches
A2:	ONE-TO-ONE CAPACITY BUILDING: Develop individual capacity building plans for VCS groups and measure increase through benchmarking and best value indices	<p>Support provided to 4 new start-up groups regarding constitutions, funding, structure, charity registration and more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West End Play, Felixstowe • Heritage Arts Company • Saxmundham Parks & Play Organisation • Woodbridge Town Pastors
A3:	INCREASE TRAINING: Organise and co-ordinate advice & training to meet specific VCS needs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and Published Booklet 'Setting up a Voluntary or Community Group' - Distributed 1000 copies to potential and existing VCS groups in Suffolk Coastal. Excellent feedback to date. • Specific Training Courses organised for Coastal Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Protection X2 - Food Hygiene - Volunteers and The Law • Other training has been provided to groups on a one-to-one basis. • General training on funding and volunteering issues provided at networking lunch events • Groups have been signposted to training provided by SAVO. • Securing of future funds from BASIS 2 to support free training provision in the district (courses starting November 2009). • Initial discussion with Suffolk Coastal District Council to provide delegate places on their in-house risk assessment training.
A4:	INCREASE VOLUNTEERING: Develop and implement strategy to promote recruitment, retention, training and effective use of volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research conducted at Woodbridge and Felixstowe, through networking lunches, for further support regarding volunteer issues. • Talks given at Woodbridge and Felixstowe lunches regarding locally appropriate ways to promote volunteering opportunities, market organisations better, work with local businesses (Woodbridge Town Partnership) and manage volunteers (Suffolk Volunteering Federation). • Promotion of Do-It website to VCS groups, encouraging groups to register their volunteer opportunities through Framlingham VC.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the work of the SCRN, the successful bidding for Volunteer Suffolk Coastal has resulted in the recruitment of a worker to operate outreach in Felixstowe, Saxmundham, Wickham Market, Woodbridge and Leiston. The initial stages of this project are in place, partnerships have been forged to identify and use locations for the outreach sessions to take place and the launches of these are currently happening.
A5:	INCREASE FUNDING: Develop & implement strategy to increase funding and diversity of funding to VCS groups in Coastal.	Funding Surgeries + visits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50+ groups supported through funding surgeries and one-to-one visits. Funding surgeries, some oversubscribed, were held in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felixstowe - October 2008 Wickham Market - October 2008 Framlingham - November 2008 Saxmundham - November 2008 Adleburgh - CANCELLED due to lack of demand - Oct & Dec 2008 Woodbridge - January 2009 Felixstowe - January 2009 Framlingham - February 2009 Leiston - Cancelled. Saxmundham - February 2009 SAVO office - February 2009 Wickham Market - April 2009 Felixstowe - April 2009 Felixstowe - April 2009 Felixstowe - May 2009 Saxmundham - May 2009 Woodbridge - June 2009 Felixstowe - June 2009 Felixstowe - June 2009 Saxmundham - July 2009 Felixstowe - August 2009 Wickham Market - August 2009 Felixstowe - September 2009 Felixstowe - September 2009 Westleton - September 2009 Wider Funding Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant funding information sent to groups through emails and newsletters, through events and funding surgeries advertised successfully on Suffolk Coastal District Council's website. Developed further links with funders - participated in The Suffolk Foundation's Grassroots Grants Advisory Panel meetings, Single Gateway Panel and attended Big Lottery Helper Agency Meetings.
A6:	IMPROVE SIGNPOSTING: Provide information and signpost to support and training on numerous issues:	Newsletters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 quarterly newsletters (Nov 08 & Feb 09) sent to over 650 VCS groups, plus all parish councils and District Councilors. Stands at events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCRN had an information stand at the Suffolk Coastal LSP event (Nov 08) and at the Saxmundham Mayor's

		<p>Evening Reception (Oct 08) - information was given to groups about SCRN services and appointments were made with existing members and new groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended 'Down Your Street, Up Your Lane' event on 26th March 2009. Contacts made with Herring Festival organizer. • Display and stall at 'Healthy Lives' event on 19th July 2009 - lots of information on the network given out. • Information and material given out at the 'Alde and Ore Conference' 4th September 2009 and the ICVS Celebration event on the 9th September 2009. <p>Websites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added regular information & dates to the new website for the Suffolk Coastal Resource Network www.scrn.org.uk <p>Other publicity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewed regarding services for Felixstowe Radio and Coastal Radio Fish. • Promotion of other organisations: VCS groups signposted to most appropriate infrastructure organisation. Other organisations invited to have stands at SCRN events
OBJECTIVE B: INCREASE LIAISON & COLLABORATION IN THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR:		
B1:	DEVELOP THE SUFFOLK COASTAL RESOURCE NETWORK (SCRN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCRN meetings held on a regular basis - new members encouraged to attend, links forged with other delivery steering groups of the LSP. • Partnership Agreement signed with SAVO and a more general one in development with the other partners. • SCRN Newsletter and website developed (as above Objective A6). • Marketing and publicity information and materials under development, utilising the BASIS funded Marketing and Communications Officer.
B2:	SUPPORT AND DEVELOP LOCAL FORUMS TO SHARE BEST PRACTICE, RESOURCES & TRAINING	<p>Networking lunches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodbridge Networking Lunch - October 14th 2008 All Woodbridge-based VCS groups were invited with 45 attending. Talks, workshop to gather information on groups' needs, networking over lunch and stands. Follow up support was given to groups as required - the main issue being a lack of volunteering coordination in the town. • Framlingham Networking Lunch - November 13th 2008 Invited 200 groups, 20 groups attended. Talks, workshop to gather information on groups' needs, networking over lunch and stands Follow up support was given to groups as required -main issue highlighted was need for further VCS services for young people and children in the town. • Felixstowe Networking Lunch - November 25th 2008 200 + groups invited, over 45 groups attended. Talks on the theme of volunteering with Q & A, and the Port Community Fund, stands from funders and detailed

		<p>evaluation / needs questionnaire completed by groups. Main concern from groups was lack of support for volunteer recruitment and training in the town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felixstowe Networking Lunch - September 30th 2009 200+ groups invited, over 45 groups attended. Talks on the Suffolk LINKs, Volunteer Suffolk Coastal, Grassroots Grants and support from Suffolk County Council funding officer. Stands from speakers and detailed evaluation / needs questionnaire completed by groups. Main concern - funding and recruiting volunteers
B4:	DEVELOP STRONG LINKS WITH OTHER LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in LIP meetings and decisions. Partnership working with BASIS 1 and 2 projects in the county. Sharing of resource of the Marketing and Communications Officer and Partnership Officer.
B5:	FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES WITHIN VCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groups and organisations networked through events, funding surgeries and newsletters. Joint bids encouraged with partners. Regular updates of partners work at SCRNs meetings. Support to VCS organisations to give them a voice at the LSP and other relevant forums.
OBJECTIVE C: INCREASED ADVOCACY, EMPOWERMENT & ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION MAKING REGARDING SERVICES AND POLICY.		
C3:	PROVIDE INFORMATION TO VCS ON DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK, WHERE AND HOW TO ENGAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAVO research report on representation promoted to some groups in District as appropriate. E.g. support given to West End Play re. engaging with the District Council - facilitated meetings between group and SCDC to resolve issues and build partnership.
C4:	PROVIDE SPECIFIC TRAINING & INFORMATION ON ADVOCACY, EMPOWERMENT AND ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representational training course developed at a county level and will be rolled out via LSP to groups in Coastal Mailed and promoted SCDC Leisure needs survey to over 200 VCS groups in Felixstowe area. Collected and forwarded concerns from VCS regarding serious weakness in this consultation and forwarded through SCRNs to SCDC.
C5:	BE AN ADVOCATE WHERE APPROPRIATE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues and needs fed regularly from the VCS in Coastal to the LSP meetings. E.g. the need for volunteer support in the Woodbridge area and the needs of the Community Development Partnerships. Advocate for best practice in funding guidelines - to SCDC re guidelines Advocate for best practice in community development and consultation - to SCDC re. Leisure needs survey in Felixstowe.

Funding pulled in:

The target for this year was £150,000, which was successfully completed early in the year mainly through the support given to Wenhaston Village Hall and the successful bid for their biomass boiler. In all, we know of 54 different grants

awarded to groups, totaling £364,441 (figures collected between January and September 2009), for projects including the Herring Festival, an organ for a parish church, running costs for Parish Nurses, toilets, young workers and activities etc..

Examples of groups supported include:

Girl Guides Colneis	Orford & Gedgrave Parish Council
St Marys Church Walton	North Sea Shores
Eyke Preschool	Key Change St Peters Church
Yoxmere Benefice Nursing	Martlesham Village Hall
Seafarers Centre	Seafront Gardens
Wickham Market Archive Centre	Benhall & Sternfield Village Hall
Transition Woodbridge	Hollesley Parish Council

Feedback:

From funding surgeries:

- "we found the funding advice very helpful, they understood what we were trying to achieve and took us straight to the relevant information".
- "this is a very useful service, particularly for groups relying on volunteers to research / raise funds for renovations".
- "it's great to have somebody to ask these questions!"
- "we greatly appreciated the interest shown by the funding advisors in our centre."
- "we've just received £12,500 from Suffolk County Council's Corporate Regeneration Fund as a result of attending a surgery"

From Networking Lunches:

- "I learnt about various services and funds I didn't know existed"
- "the networking is a great opportunity to meet others."
- "we need support with recruiting volunteers and getting more funding in"

Future work from October 2009:

BASIS 2:

Free training courses to run in the district identified as:

- Writing effective funding applications -
Monday 16th November 2009, Felixstowe Maidstone Hall AM session
Monday 18th January 2010, Saxmundham session AM Session
- Introduction to Managing Your Finances
10th March 2010 - Leiston Long Shop Museum
- Managing Risk
Currently being developed by Suffolk Coastal District Council of which places will be allocated for the VCS.
- Taking Parish Plans to the Next Stage
Currently in development by Suffolk ACRE
- Specific funding and development support for village halls
Two half day sessions currently being developed by Suffolk ACRE.

Funded through the LSP:

Continuation of the VCS Development Co-ordinator post in the district for 15 hours per week for a further two years.

Outcomes:

- Through access to funding and development surgeries, groups will be more fit for purpose in terms of sustainability and future plans, have a better understanding of their responsibilities to staff, volunteers and their clients, be able to monitor and evaluate their services robustly and have an opportunity to seek a range of funding sources, supporting NI6 and NI7.
- Groups will have a better understanding of their legal obligations in terms of good governance (such as policies and procedures, constitutions, committee development, financial regulations) and are supported through information, advice and guidance to put good practice into place.
- Through networking & training events, the VCS are given a platform for engagement in developing partnerships, taking part in relevant consultations and accessing key information and best practice from LSP partners.
- A consultation structure is developed for the Sector to be better engaged in decision making in the district

- Activity is better co-ordinated, advertised and supported to ensure LSP partners and working groups are able to work in a more joined up way to provide services and engage with the VCS.

Outputs:

- 200 VCS groups supported over the two years through funding and development surgeries
- £230,000 of additional funding brought into the district
- 30 new groups supported to ensure best practice in terms of governance, service delivery and sustainability.
- 150 organisations attend training or networking events
- Simple protocol for sharing information developed
- Strong links forged with other working groups / SCDC to co-ordinate activity
- Survey of VCS organisations carried out to ensure there is up to date information on groups, the services they provide and the key issues they face in their locality or area.

Volunteer Suffolk Coastal:

Building on the success of Framlingham Volunteer Centre, Volunteer Suffolk Coastal plans to extend volunteering across the rest of the district, focusing on the recruitment of volunteers (200), placing them in meaningful volunteering opportunities and offering them continuing support in their endeavours.

Volunteer Suffolk Coastal will work closely with voluntary and community organisations and groups (100) to ascertain their need for volunteers and to develop suitable opportunities to fulfill their requirements.

This funding will provide a fourth working day for the Co-ordinator in order that she is able to reach a wider audience of volunteer involving groups in Suffolk Coastal District Council (excluding the Framlingham area but working in close partnership with this organisation) This money will enable the Co-ordinator to meet people and groups on their premises to ascertain their specific needs and also with funders to encourage more monies to be committed to this area

Development of Work Plan for SCRNI

The next stage for the SCRNI is to re-define its work plan, reflecting the projects and activities set out above.

The start of this process will begin with the Suffolk Coastal LSP Forum workshop to gauge the support needs of voluntary and community organisations in the coming year, particularly in light of the recession and projected cuts to public sector funding.