

ADEPT President's Awards 2024

Entry form

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Award category Shaping Places for People

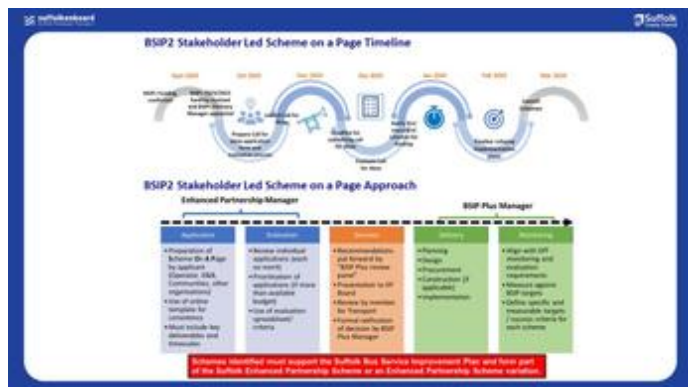
Project Title Stakeholder Led Scheme On A Page (SOAP)

Local authority entrant Suffolk County Council

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

Approach to enable community led bus schemes to be planned, evaluated, funded and delivered across Suffolk within a demanding timeframe.

Please note we need at least one supporting image per award submission. Upload your image/s below.



Video - please paste links to any video evidence here. (Leave blank if not relevant.)

<https://youtu.be/QVktOGKp-Dw>

Shaping places for people: How was this project an innovative response to a significant concern? (150 words max.)

Access to services, jobs, green space and other facilities is consistently identified as influencing a person’s quality of life impacting on wider health and social care budgets. Suffolk CC was awarded BSIP2 funding with £1.2 million allocated to Stakeholder Led SOAPs. The challenge was how to spend such a small amount of funding effectively to deliver solutions local communities would value within nine months. Following an open call for suggestions we received over 60 scheme suggestions from stakeholders with a total value of over £10 million.

In less than four months we:

- Launched a Call for ideas using a simple online application portal
- Presented the Stakeholder Led SOAP process to all interested stakeholders through our established EP Forums
- Evaluated over 60 schemes
- Completed a formal review with the SCC Member for Transport
- Gained approval from the Suffolk EP Board to fund ten schemes.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

By April 2024:

- Three of the ten approved schemes were in operation
- A further three had confirmed start dates
- Two schemes enabled continued operation of flexible services supporting rural communities and one was exploring how to support DRT services with digital solutions.

Of schemes funded:

- 46% were bus operator led with County, District or Parish Council support ;
- 15% were District or Parish Council led;
- 39% were joint bids

Suffolk designate rurality as a tenth protected characteristic. Community led flexible services to support rural connections to larger settlements accounted for 16% of SOAP submissions taken forward.

Not only did our approach deliver schemes that communities asked for we were able to assess how schemes helped reduce the potential impacts of factors such as transport poverty and social isolation by using our accessibility assessment tool. This identified how the schemes improved household accessibility to key services.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

Our Stakeholder Led SOAP process epitomises collaboration between departments, agencies and organisations. It combined the collective knowledge and experience of councils, local communities, and bus operators to deliver services that addressed real accessibility challenges.

Information on the open call for ideas was issued via our Enhanced Partnership Forum and Passenger Interest Group. Bidders were encouraged to submit joint bids. We offered collaborative support to bidders through a direct contact email address and FAQ documentation.

Evaluation of the Stakeholder Led SOAP applications was completed by a panel of officers collaborating across the Council's Passenger Transport and Transport Strategy teams.

We provided bespoke feedback to all applicants and for those successful in receiving funding we established a series of progress meetings to support them through to implementation.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care and external organisations. (150 words max.)

We focused on innovative solutions that could be co-ordinated on a local level in collaboration with transport providers and sustained once the initial funding was used. We expanded the call for ideas to include a wide range of organisations including:

- Suffolk Disability Forum
- Suffolk Sight
- Suffolk Coalition of Disabled People
- Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum
- Community Action Suffolk
- Healthwatch.

The level of buy in from lead stakeholders and local communities is shown in the video attached to our application on what the funded schemes means to people. The level of buy in from the local community is particularly showcased by the BBC Suffolk news article:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cer3glkrk12o> where villagers celebrated the start of the new service 8B.

The Stakeholder Led SOAP process generated over 60 potential schemes with a further standout scheme that created a vision for enhanced transport to healthcare across Suffolk being progressed separately.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

We explored how to combine funding sources to give services a better chance of long term financially

viability. We identified how BSIP 2 funding would support the initial delivery of schemes in conjunction with additional contributions from sources such as Section 106 and Stakeholder match funding. This enabled stakeholders to reduce their initial risk to test ideas for new or improved services.

Dan Bassett, MD Ipswich Buses, said:

"Significant financial challenges are presented to bus operators when considering introducing a new bus service. The costs associated with implementing a service are high, and there are significant challenges in generating enough passengers to make a service viable. The support the service will receive through the BSIP 2 funding removes much of this pressure and provides the best possible platform to make the service a long-term success. We look forward to working in partnership with Suffolk County Council to deliver this service."

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

Following a presentation to the Department for Transport in March 2024 on how Suffolk is progressing its BSIP and EP with a small amount of BSIP 2 funding we received the following positive feedback from Ben Kempner, Senior Policy Advisor, Bus Recovery and Reform Division :

"During our recent site visit to Suffolk, we were particularly impressed with the innovative idea that your team had developed and implemented to involve a wider audience in proposing ways to spend your BSIP2 government funding allocation on local bus improvements. The Scheme on a Page innovation demonstrated the opportunity to give operators, parish councils and local communities a proactive voice in presenting their ideas and proposals for helping their local bus services meet their needs and demands. We felt that this approach allows you to consider a wide and diverse range of projects both in the short-term using existing funding and in the long term to assist you in developing a priority list of projects to be implemented through any future funding opportunities, subject to your normal technical clearance and value for money appraisal procedures. In addition, you took the time to provide feedback to all those who submitted proposals to explain your rationale for acceptance or deferral, thereby providing them with reassurance that all projects had been thoroughly considered for feasibility. The Bus Reform Team at DfT always welcomes new, innovative ways of working like this to support and improve local bus markets for passengers."