



Putting Suffolk's waste to good use

Operational update

It has been almost two years since we increased the operational capacity of the Suffolk energy-from-waste facility from 269,000 tonnes to 295,000 tonnes, diverting an additional 26,000 tonnes of waste away from landfill. In 2020, we processed 289,000 tonnes of household waste left after recycling, and we are on track to process a similar amount by the end of 2021.

We are about to enter our eighth year of partnership with Suffolk County Council. Over the life of the partnership to date, we have processed just under two million tonnes of waste, putting it to good use as a fuel to generate electricity for the national grid.

Heritage Open Days 2021

In early September, the facility took part in the national Heritage Open Days festival for the third year running. Whilst the site remained closed to visitors, we ran virtual sessions as an alternative to an in-person event. Seventy-five attendees tuned in live to one of two webinars which included a presentation about the facility and its role in managing household waste in Suffolk, a virtual tour, and a question-and-answer session led by our Community Liaison Manager along with a member of the waste team from Suffolk County Council.



We were again disappointed that we were unable to open our doors to visitors for the 2021 festival, but we were really pleased with the response from the public and the number of people who tuned in live to find out more about waste in Suffolk. If you missed the session, you can watch a recording on YouTube via the news section of our website: www.suffolkefw.co.uk/who-we-are/news.



Biodiversity

Did you know that the Suffolk energy-from-waste facility is home to a whole host of biodiversity? If you have ever had the chance to visit the facility, you will have seen first-hand our wildflower meadow, situated out the front of the facility. The meadow is self-seeding, meaning all that's needed is a once a year cut in Autumn, and it's back to an array of pinks, purples, and yellows come the next spring.

We also have several mature trees on site which we avoided disturbing during the construction of the facility in the early 2010s. Post-construction, we have planted over 150 native trees, including horse chestnut, oak, and maple. These saplings have had a few years to establish themselves now, and this summer, the team were able to remove all the protective tree guards.



Beehives

The facility is also home to a colony of bees, located towards the back of our wildflower meadow and managed by a local beekeeper. The colony has grown considerably since their introduction in 2018, from 50,000 to over 250,000. The meadow has proved to be an ideal location for the colony, providing a great source of food for the worker bees.

Bees are crucial for global food production and the varied, nutritious diets we need, providing a vital role in pollination, helping plants grow, breed, and produce food. They do this by transferring pollen between flowering plants, keeping the cycle of life going. With bee populations declining across the UK, we are happy to be able to provide a safe home to pollinate the local land.



Peregrine falcons remain on site

The pair, believed to be from the local area, have been spotted around the facility for the past couple of years, in particular on the northwest side of the building and on our 80 metre stacks (chimneys). The pair likely nested somewhere on site in 2020.

Last year, with the help of some local experts, we built and installed a nesting box for the pair, in the hope that they would raise their young in view of the attached camera. Despite exploring it, the pair unfortunately did not take to the box this nesting season, choosing to nest elsewhere on site instead in 2021. We hope that by spring 2022 the falcons will be more accustomed to the nesting box and we will be able to watch the amazing process of raising the chicks.

Peregrine falcons are a protected species in the UK, and are among the fastest animals on the planet, reaching speeds of 200 miles per hour when 'stooping' – diving on their prey from height. Breeding pairs are most commonly found in the uplands of the northern UK, but they are increasingly being seen further south, nesting on tall, city structures that mimic the cliff edges they would naturally nest upon.

Our commitment to Biodiversity

In 2020, SUEZ committed to improving biodiversity on every SUEZ site across the country. Throughout 2021, our teams have been carrying out regular biodiversity surveys and drafting and delivering a biodiversity action plan at each of our 150 plus locations.

This includes our energy-from-waste facilities, landfills, offices, and recycling centres. Even our sites with little or no green space have been embracing the challenge, constructing planters out of reused waste materials, or by adding green roofs to buildings or living walls to perimeter fencing.



The team in Suffolk have ambitious plans to further improve biodiversity on site. In early 2021, we invited the Suffolk Wildlife Trust to the site to conduct a survey and provide advice and guidance on where to target biodiversity improvements. As well as the nesting box for the peregrines, we've built bat and bird boxes from old pallets, and will be installing nesting boxes for swifts on the side of the building. Longer term projects include planting fruit trees and edible hedgerows around the site and constructing raised beds for our on-site picnic area. These will be planted with more shrubs and flowers to compliment bees, butterflies, and other insects.

Visitor centre update

At the energy-from-waste facility, we offer tours of the site to visiting educational and adult groups. Usually, we welcome over 1,000 people to the site each year, including schools, clubs, local residents, and adult and community groups. Visitors can witness the energy-from-waste process in action, and visit our purpose-built visitor centre, which features information and interactive activities on the topics of waste, energy, and the environment.

We are particularly proud of our education offering for primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities, and youth groups such as Brownies and Cubs. We provide age-appropriate educational activities for all visitors from age seven and have been awarded a Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge for our commitment to sustaining high quality learning on site.

Tours of the site are free of charge to all visiting groups. If you know of any educational or adult groups, or local residents who would be interested in visiting the site, please contact us at suffolkefw.uk@suez.com.

Update on 'in person' visits

In March 2020, we made the difficult decision to temporarily close our visitor centre to the public to protect the essential service that SUEZ and Suffolk County Council provide. At the time of writing this newsletter, in-person visits to the facility remain suspended. We are continuing to monitor the situation and will open our doors again when it is safe and practical to do so.

If you would like to visit for a tour, please get in touch via suffolkefw.uk@suez.com to make a booking. If we remain closed for in-person visits, we will add you to our waiting list and contact you when we reopen.



Virtual resources for schools and community groups

Whilst our doors have been closed, we have been busy hosting virtual lessons, events and webinars with local residents, community groups and schools, making use of our virtual tour video, which includes areas of the site which are normally off limits to visitors. These resources will still be available once we do reopen, so if your group can't make it to the site, get in touch about booking a virtual visit.

Schools and clubs – We can offer a tailored virtual lesson which will include an interactive presentation about the waste hierarchy, the 4 Rs and the facility, followed by a video tour of the site and the chance to ask questions. If you have any special requirements or topics, let us know beforehand and we can tailor your lesson. These lessons can also be delivered in the classroom by our Community Liaison Manager.

Adult groups and individuals – A virtual tour will last around an hour and will include a presentation about waste, recycling, the facility, and the energy-from-waste process, followed by a video tour of the site and a Q&A session with our Community Liaison Manager.