

Parish Report – August 2025

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Mid Suffolk Rural Support Fund

As of Monday, 28 July, rural businesses can apply for grants to improve their shopfronts, while communities can apply for financial support to help with the purchase of their assets.

The remaining branches of the Mid Suffolk Rural Support Fund will then be rolled out over the coming months.

To submit an application or find out more information, businesses should [visit the Heart of Suffolk website](#) and community organisations should [visit the Mid Suffolk District Council community funding page](#).

The Mid Suffolk Rural Support Fund has been created to support towns and villages outside of Stowmarket, with a variety of different funding opportunities available for local businesses and community organisations to benefit from.

£300,000 is available to be applied for each year, with the money allocated from the Mid Suffolk District Council Ambitions Programme.

Funding can be used for, but is not limited to, the following:

- Helping with the purchase of threatened community assets, such as shops, pubs and community cafes
- Making physical improvements to shopfronts
- Supporting local markets and food initiatives
- Improving the local environment
- Establishing art and culture events
- Encouraging the integration of sustainable travel services,
- Bolstering digital infrastructure

Suffolk's Big Weekend announced, with attractions encouraged to sign up

The event, which takes place on 18 and 19 October this year, shines a spotlight on the rich culture and visitor attractions that can be found close to home – giving people the chance to enter a free prize draw with the hope of winning some prizes and exclusive experiences at some of the county's attractions.

Launched in Babergh and Mid Suffolk last year, the event has now been expanded to cover the whole of Suffolk in partnership with other district and borough councils – encouraging locals to explore, and be proud of, where they live.

Businesses are encouraged to put forward a visitor experience or offer, with anyone living in the county then able to put their name into the free prize draw to win it.

So far, prizes already pledged include tickets to see a band at the John Peel Centre in Stowmarket, a voucher for Press Start Gaming in Ipswich, a trip for two with Suffolk River Trips, and a visit for four to Purple Pumpkin Creative Studio in Halesworth.

The public ballot is set to open on Monday 1 September.

Any businesses that would like to take part in the Big Weekend should contact bmsdctourismandculture@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk.

More information about available prizes will be shared closer to when the ballot opens.

£415k pot for improving rural businesses

The Rural Business Growth Fund has been set up to offer capital grants of up to £10,000 to projects which focus on sustainability, diversification and improving the local tourism and visitor economy.

In order to receive a grant, projects must meet one of the following priorities:

- Investment in net zero infrastructure
- Investment and diversification at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Farm diversification outside of agriculture
- Visitor economy business expansion

The total value of the fund stands at £415,519, with £178,922 available for businesses in Babergh and £236,597 in Mid Suffolk.

Grants of up to £15,000 can also be agreed for projects which strongly support the net zero infrastructure or farm diversification priorities.

The money is coming from the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund, which offers financial support to help improve productivity while strengthening rural economies and communities.

Since 2023, the councils have used more than £1.1 million from the Rural England Prosperity Fund to support projects across the districts, with £647,757 awarded to 47 applicants in Mid Suffolk and £462,649 to 48 applicants in Babergh.

Examples include the conversion of a cowshed into visitor accommodation at TH Feavearyear and Son farm in Wingfield, equipping Fork Kitchen & Deli in Hadleigh with new ovens and mixers for its bakery, and installing solar panels at Lucid Systems in Hintlesham to help the business reduce its carbon emissions.

Applications for the fund are now open and are being assessed on a first come, first served basis.

To find out more information about the Rural Business Growth Fund, [visit the Heart of Suffolk website](#).

A reminder that I have now been issued with this year's Locality Budget to support activities and groups in the Rattlesden Ward.