

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

SUFFOLK TO BECOME THE FIRST “CHINA FRIENDLY COUNTY”

The Suffolk Summit on 14 October 2009 will see Jeremy Pembroke, the Leader of Suffolk County Council, launch an official campaign to make Suffolk the First China Friendly County in the UK.

The aim is to take the lead in promoting Suffolk as a destination to the Chinese visitor market. In a time when other traditional markets for tourism are declining, the growth of China cannot be underestimated:

- This country of 1.3 billion people recently became the world’s 3rd largest economy
- Chinese visitor numbers to London are projected to rise 425% in the run up to the 2012 Olympics
- Outbound trips from China as a whole will rise from 17 million in 2002 to 100 million by 2020 (a similar 500% increase)

The growing middle-class within China is hungry for travel, and is effectively a blank canvas with few fixed ideas of where to go abroad. By extending a hand and showing that it is keen to attract the Chinese, Suffolk can at this stage get ahead of the crowd. Very few areas even within the world market have taken such steps.

The official campaign comprises a full and comprehensive website in Mandarin detailing Suffolk’s attractions, a PR campaign within China, and signing up local businesses to make them more “China Friendly”. This can comprise the creation of micro-websites in Chinese, through to translation of menus and visitor information into the language, as well as staff training to highlight the specific needs of the market.

In 1950 a similar initiative was set up by a rural region in post-war torn southern Germany. A tourism route was simply created and signposted “Romantic Road” in Japanese, and local businesses were encouraged to attract Japanese guests. It has led to millions of tourist nights spent by Japanese visitors and a massive cash injection from them over decades. An amazing 93% of Japanese recently surveyed were familiar with the Romantic Road – which shows the level of market penetration that is possible. This is as a direct result of the forward thinking efforts of the initiative to make the region “Japan Friendly” and of travellers returning home and spreading its reputation by word of mouth.

Suffolk’s project has already caught the imagination of many people even before its official launch. The Chinese Embassy in London, the British Embassy in

Beijing, and the Business Secretary's department have all voiced their official support and are all following the developments with interest.

Celia Hodson, the chief executive of Choose Suffolk, commented "Suffolk is the quintessential English county, with wonderful countryside, a beautiful coast, historic towns and it is within easy reach of the capital. The horse-racing centre of Newmarket is also a major attraction to the Chinese visitor. We have a real opportunity here and it is very exciting to be launching this campaign now."

The China Friendly Campaign has been developed with the help of Yaxley Consulting in Beijing. MD Drew Ross said *"We have been delighted to be involved with this campaign and admire the forward-thinking spirit of the County Council. We are a Suffolk based company and know the incredible response to be achieved in China through reaching out a welcoming hand from the West. We are here to help translate materials into Chinese and to help any Suffolk business, large or small, wishing to get involved. The long term benefits to all involved are potentially phenomenal."*

More information on the rationale behind the campaign and how individual businesses can sign up to it are available at www.chinafriendlysuffolk.co.uk

Ends

NOTES to Editors:

1. For any further details, please contact Peter Ede at Yaxley Hall, Hall Lane, Yaxley, Suffolk IP23 8BY. Telephone 01379 788869 or 07828 133841. Email peter@yaxleyhall.net
2. Yaxley Consulting Beijing is a wholly-owned Chinese subsidiary of Yaxley Hall Limited in Suffolk. It provides consultancy and educational services to the Chinese market and was set up in 2007. It has combined with Choose Suffolk and Suffolk County Council to create this campaign.
3. Images appropriate to the campaign are available on the www.chinafriendlysuffolk.co.uk website and in higher resolution by request.