

## Great Yarmouth and Waveney NOVEMBER 2009



## Summary

A busy month for business news – with the vast majority positive across most sectors. Some positive signs in some of the harder hit sectors including manufacturing, engineering and energy, particularly examples of SMEs performing well and exporters benefiting from the competitive exchange rate. Tourism, a very significant sector for the Great Yarmouth/Waveney sub-region, has enjoyed a very successful year, with most businesses showing double digit growth.

However December headlines look far tougher, with significant job losses at offshore engineering business SLP and manufacturer Jen Weld.

There are reasonable prospects for SLP being sold as a going concern, but there are significant concerns about the impact on the supply chain in the short and medium terms. Added to this - Norwich energy heavyweight Acteon is also predicting a tougher 2010 - which is expected to bring additional pressures for the supply chain.

News from housebuilder Persimmon suggests some confidence returning to the construction sector – coupled with house prices in both Norfolk and Suffolk continuing a gentle upward trend.

Unemployment in Great Yarmouth saw a worrying jump in November – with the figure flat in Waveney. However Great Yarmouth has also seen a healthy rise in vacancies – greater than other parts of Norfolk.

There has also been a notable drop in the number of public sector vacancies advertised in the local press – a trend which will continue in 2010.

## Trading Climate & Confidence Levels

### **Key Facts**

Major push to promote Lowestoft as a centre for the renewables industry. Yarmouth-based Perenco and Centrica sign a joint venture over gas storage. SLP in Lowestoft placed into administration and Jen Weld factory in Lowestoft to close. Tourism businesses record a bumper 2009.

### **Agriculture & Food Processing**

First Quench Retailing – off-licence operating under retail brands including Thresher, Wine Rack, Bottoms Up and the Local – has gone into administration. Fears have been raised over the future of more than 1,200 off-licences including Bottoms Up in Norwich, Local branches in Diss, Catton, East DEREHAM AND Heacham and a Threshers shop in Bungay.

An environmentally responsible fishing research programme, launched last year has been ended by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The programme has allowed ten boats from Lowestoft to land fish above their quotas on allocated days to allow scientists to find out more about the numbers and types of fish living in the North Sea. The programme has closed due to the large amounts of fish being landed and has angered fisherman due to how sudden the decision was made.

### **Creative**

The Courtyard, Great Yarmouth – aiming to be the new hub for hand-made arts and crafts in the town, attracting locals and tourists. The £400,000 development of the bottom floor of a currently derelict Victorian building into a home for creativity in the area, above which they will also be four apartments, is due to open in May 2010.

<http://the-courtyard.co.uk>

Archant (media group) and Adnams (brewer, Southwold) have formed a new hi-tech partnership with the launch of a new PinkUn mobile website. Adnams will sponsor the new site – which will allow sports fans to keep track of news and results on their mobile phones.

### **Construction**

Persimmon, Lowestoft – house builder – expected to carry a healthy order book into next year, but warned the market remained vulnerable because of the impact of higher unemployment and problems with mortgage availability. In August, the company nationally posted pre-tax profits of £9.8m for the six months to June 30, down from £36.9m in the same period last year. The company said it expected to legally complete the sale of about 9,000 homes this year, compared with just over 10,000 in 2008.

## Energy

A £1.2M project to turn Lowestoft harbour into the operational base for the world's largest offshore wind farm is gathering pace with the completion of the main headquarters building. In Spring, the Associated British Ports announced that Lowestoft had been chosen as the operations and maintenance base for the 140-turbine Greater Gabbard wind farm.

It is hoped that the wind farm will produce enough electricity to power more than 500,000 homes.

A major push from 1<sup>st</sup> East Urban Regeneration Company and Associated British Ports has started to persuade green energy firms to make Lowestoft their operations base when building wind turbines off the East Anglian coast. The latest round of licences from the Crown Estate to build offshore windfarms includes "zone five" – an area just 25km out of Lowestoft.

Organisations supporting Lowestoft's bid to provide an operations and maintenance base include the SLP Group, Suffolk County Council, Waveney District Council, Renewables East, the East of England Energy Group, NWES and the East of England Development Agency.

Orbis Energy, Lowestoft – East of England's offshore renewables hub, managed by NWES – celebrated its first anniversary after completing its busiest month of tenancy inquiries. The complex provides state-of-the-art offices, virtual tenancy and conference facilities. The building is half full with 14 tenant businesses specifically operating in the renewable energy supply chain.

Centrica Storage and Perenco UK have formed a new company called the Bacton Storage Company Limited (BSCL) in the hope of using a 1.7bn cubic metre gas field called Baird for gas storage. If the site was to be used for storage it could increase UK storage capacity by around a third. The multi-million pound project would boost the UK's security of supply.

This project will be facing a formal public consultation, but if planning permission is granted and construction goes to plan, the storage facility could be up and running by May 2012.

Fern Communications, Lowestoft – offshore communications company to the oil and gas industry – South Wales and Bedfordshire and Luton fire and rescue services have been trialling the FRX-1 radio repeater from Fern Communications with the hopes of improving the safety of firefighters working in dangerous or confined spaces.

Volunteer lifeboat crews at Lowestoft, Southwold, Aldeburgh and Harwich are to receive regular training thanks to £300,000 of funding by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) partnership. SSE is one of the companies developing the Greater Gabbard wind farm about 15 miles off the Suffolk coast, which when completed will be the largest offshore wind farm in the world.

### **Engineering**

Softstart UK, Great Yarmouth – a consultancy, manufacturer and distributor of automated products, employs 10 people but the company plans to double within a year – has signed a contract to provide motor starts for booster pumps for Cairo's sewerage infrastructure. The deal is the biggest contract yet signed by Softstart, but feel the Egyptian market could remain a lucrative one for the company. The company is three and a half years old and last year turnover was £500,000. The company has given further quotes to the Egyptian authorities for four or five other projects worth an additional £4m or £5m.

### **Manufacturing**

CDi Worldwide, Beccles – custom-built packaging machine manufacturer – set to double its turnover to £1.5m this year after a boom in demand. The company is set to take on five additional staff this year to cope with demand after growing from four to 10 employees in the past 18 months.

### **Tourism**

Great Yarmouth

- A good year
- Self-catering has done well
- Car parking was up nearly 30%
- Extra visitors are down to the revamping of the seafront / better image and PR work

Great Yarmouth's SeaChange Arts group is planning to hold a Mardi Gras on Pancake Day, February 16 2010. The fiesta will be centred on King Street and the influence has been taken from the Portuguese and Lithuanian migrant communities.

Hippodrome Circus, Great Yarmouth – outlook for international classical concerts at the venue is looking bleak because of poor ticket sales – sparking a use it or lose it warning from bosses.

The 90 piece Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra playing this month had sold fewer than 400 seats for the 900 capacity auditorium

Marina Theatre, Lowestoft – 750 seater venue - calls have been made for the council-run theatre to be moved into the hands of a trust to help secure its future after cutbacks have forced management at the town centre complex to reduce its start studded line up for the coming year. The new brochure lists just 16 events in the 90-day period between next January and the end of March.

Tourism in the Waveney Valley could be boosted as local businesses are asked to help develop a brand identity to promote the area to visitors. East of England Tourism is working with the Waveney Valley Local Action Group to come up with new branding, including a logo design and strapline.

Great Yarmouth's Christmas Fayre – now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year - will have an ice rink alongside more than 40 stalls, fairground rides and other entertainment.

### **Other**

Harrod UK, Lowestoft – sporting products with a turnover of £10m a year, employs about 120 people and founded in 1954 beginning with the repair of old fishing nets and turning them into gardening netting – has won a £200,000-plus order to supply goalposts and team shelters to the under-17 football World Cup. The company has exported 50 sets of Wembley-standard goals, 40 team shelters for the substitutes and 20 officials' shelters for the tournament being played out in Nigeria.

The deal is the latest international success for the firm, whose sporting products can already be found at Wembley, the Bernabeu in Madrid and Eithad Stadium in Melbourne.

Hospitality & Grow, Lowestoft – part of the Grow Organisation which provides training for disadvantaged people across different spheres – has seen success after launching at the Atlantis Arena nightclub, bars and arcades complex six months ago. Of the 15 trainees, ranging from ex-offenders to people with learning difficulties who were originally taken on to work alongside the complex's 40 existing staff, five have been taken on as full-time employees, five have found jobs elsewhere and four are still in training. Only one dropped out and has since found a position.

### **Other Information**

Waveney council – is trying to secure its budget to enable key projects across the district to carry on amid increasing fears of a £9m black hole. It comes as a long-running dispute with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) deepens over its attempts to claw back benefit subsidies (DWP calculated that the council had been overpaid £8.9m in subsidies between 2004 and 2007).

### **December Headlines**

SLP Engineering, Lowestoft – gas and oil rigs, wind energy – at risk of job losses. Administrator PricewaterhouseCoopers is hoping to find a buyer for the business and protect about 700 jobs, after 45 management jobs were lost. The 700 jobs are secure until SLP completes a separate major project for BP next spring.

Lowestoft has been crowned Enterprise Capital of Britain this month, with much of the success being attributed to the major turnaround in fortunes of Lowestoft and the work of Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Services (NWES). NWES, founded in 1982 to help combat the effects of large scale redundancies in the town has helped start up more than 5,000 new businesses, creating almost 10,000 jobs regionally. In the past five years, NWES has helped 217 new businesses to start, completed 2,197 training days and has held over 4,740 advice sessions.

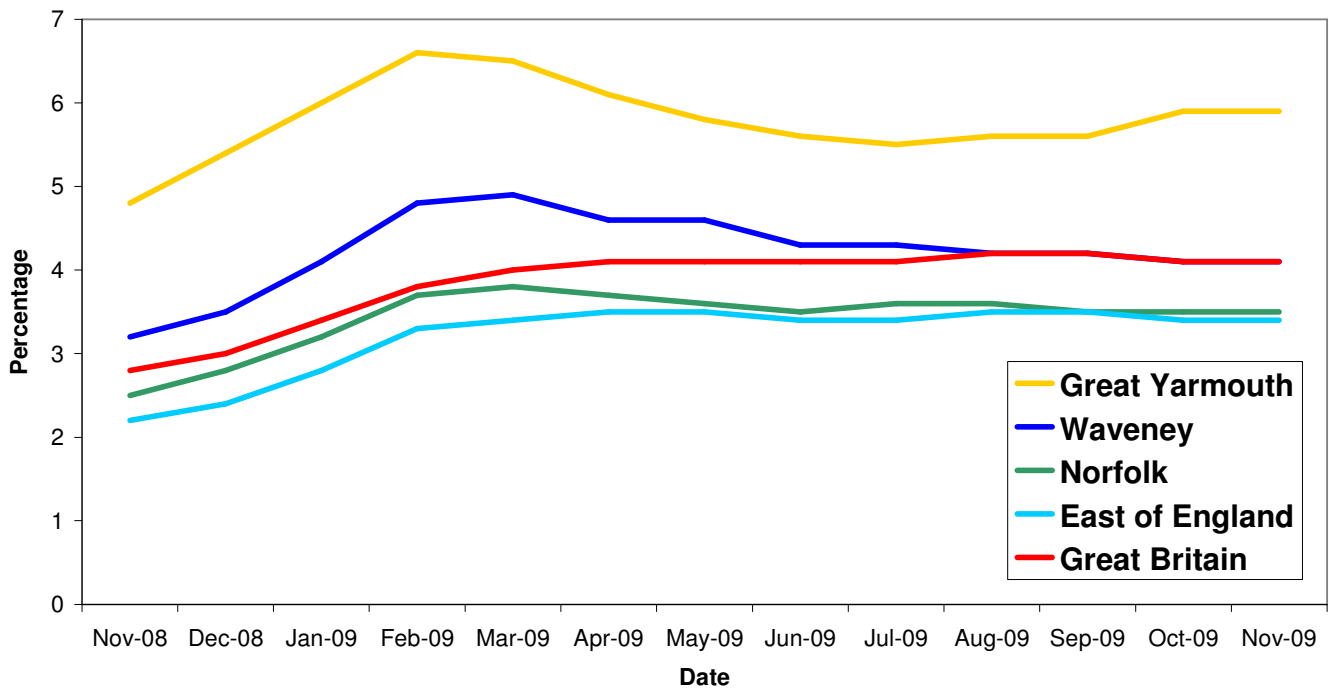
Jeld-Wen, Lowestoft – timber manufacturing which mills and treats wood which is made into doors, window frames and stairs at Jeld Wen's other factories and exported all over the world – is set to close in phases in the new year with the loss of 194 jobs as the need to cut costs follows the recent slowdown in the construction industry.

## Unemployment

### Key Facts

- Norfolk JSA claimant count was 18, 013 in November, up 365 or 20.1% since October 2009 but up by 5,554 on the year, a 44.6% increase since November 2008.
- Great Yarmouth JSA claimant count was 3,447 in November, up 223 or 6.9% since October 2009 but up by 832 on the year, a 31.8% increase since November 2008.
- Waveney JSA claimant count was 2,698 in November, up 3 or 0.1% since October 2009 but up by 581 on the year, a 27.4% increase since November 2008.

## All people claiming JSA



Source: Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics

Area	Count	%age of working age population	Change in count year on year	%age change in count year on year
Great Yarmouth	3,447	6.3	832	31.8%
Waveney	2,698	4.1	581	27.4

Source: Job Centre Plus

## Redundancies

### Key Facts

**There have been 270 redundancies notified to Norfolk Job Centre Plus between July 2008 and 30 November 2009 for Great Yarmouth. This accounts for four percent of the total notified to Norfolk Job Centre Plus, a drop of 0.5% since October 2009.**

*Source: Job Centre Plus*

## Job Adverts (EDP)

Date	Pages	Public Sector Jobs (council, education, NHS, healthcare)	Private Sector Jobs	Third Sector Jobs
5 <sup>th</sup> November	7	71 (61.21%)	37 (31.90%)	8 (6.9%)
12 <sup>th</sup> November	9	88 (61.54%)	48 (33.57%)	7 (4.9%)
19 <sup>th</sup> November	7	88 (68.84%)	32 (25.4%)	6 (4.76%)
26 <sup>th</sup> November	6 and a 1/2	88 (50.29)	74 (42.29%)	13 (7.43%)

*Unless figure or positions stated each advert is counted as one position*

## Job Adverts (Yarmouth Mercury)

Date	Pages	Public Sector Jobs (council, education, NHS, healthcare)	Private Sector Jobs	Third Sector Jobs
6 <sup>th</sup> November	1	5 (35.71)	4 (28.57)	5 (35.71)
13 <sup>th</sup> November	2	10 (62.50%)	3 (18.75%)	3 (18.75%)
20 <sup>th</sup> November	1	9 (64.29%)	5 (35.71%)	0
27 <sup>th</sup> November	1	9 (47.37%)	5 (26.32)	5 (26.32)

## Job Adverts (Lowestoft Journal)

Date	Pages	Public Sector Jobs (council, education, NHS, healthcare)	Private Sector Jobs	Third Sector Jobs
6 <sup>th</sup> November	1	12 (54.55%)	10 (45.45)	0
13 <sup>th</sup> November	2	16 (59.26%)	10 (37.04%)	1 (3.70%)
20 <sup>th</sup> November	2	5 (20%)	16 (64%)	4 (16%)
27 <sup>th</sup> November	1	7 (41.18)	10 (58.82)	0

4, 118 jobs in Norfolk were notified to Job Centre Plus. Of these 65 percent were full time positions. Notified vacancies were up 2.5 percent from October's total.

- Great Yarmouth had 433, a rise of 11 percent since last year and an increase of 37 percent from October.

3,550 jobs in Suffolk were notified to Job Centre Plus. Notified vacancies were down 3.79 percent from October's total.

- Lowestoft had 241 (of these 66 percent were full time positions), a decrease of 65 percent since last year and a 30.35 percent decrease from October.

## Norfolk JCP Figures

Industry	Norfolk	
	November 08	November 09
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	12	43
Manufacturing	88	152
Electricity, gas and water supply	25	8
Construction	179	186
Wholesale and retail trade	602	561
Hotels and restaurants	286	218
Transport, storage and communication	47	57
Financial intermediation	127	60
Real estate, renting and business activities	1,670	1,686
Public administration/defence/compulsory social security	271	168
Education	72	100
Health and social work	510	576
Other community, social and personal service activities	122	295
Column Total	<b>4,011</b>	<b>4,110</b>

 Industry sectors with a loss in vacancies

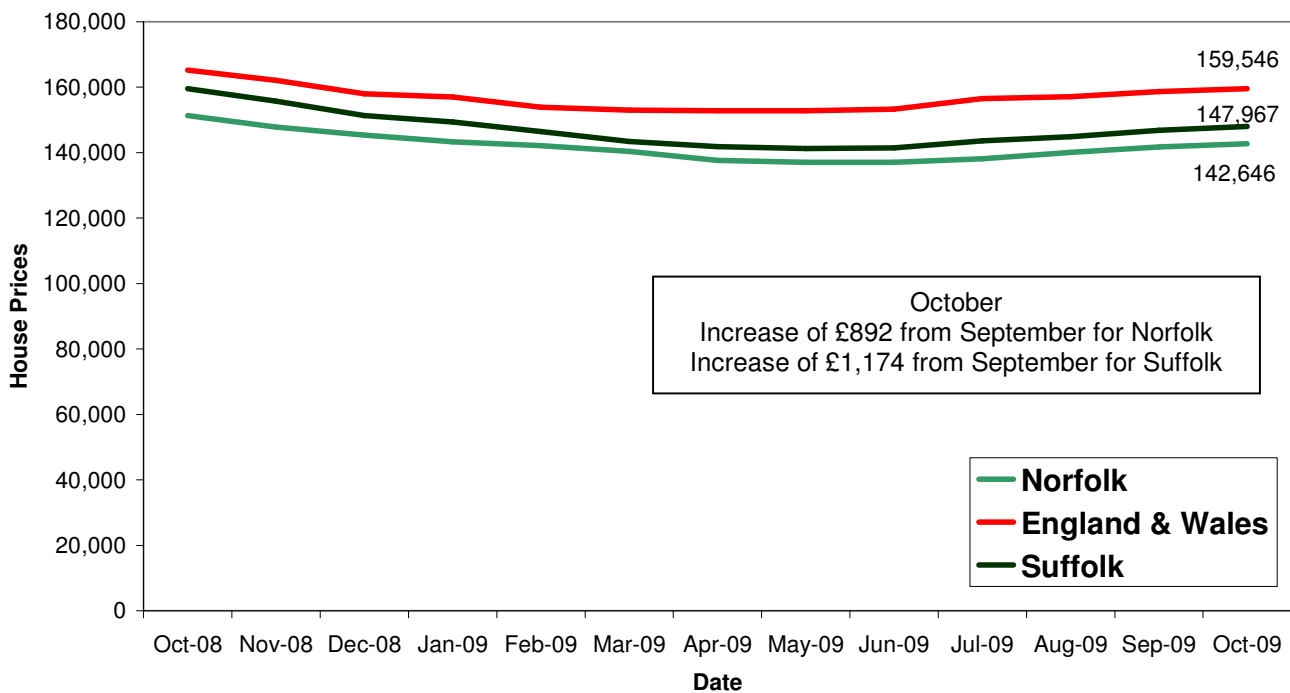
## Housing

### Key Facts

- UK house prices increased by 1.4% in November. This is the fifth consecutive month which has seen an increase in prices. Prices have increased by 8.5% since reaching a trough in April 2009; an increase in the average price of £13,174. This follows a decline of 23% between August 2007 and April 2009.
- **Average House price £167, 664**

Source: Halifax House Price Index

## House Price Trends



Source: Land Registry