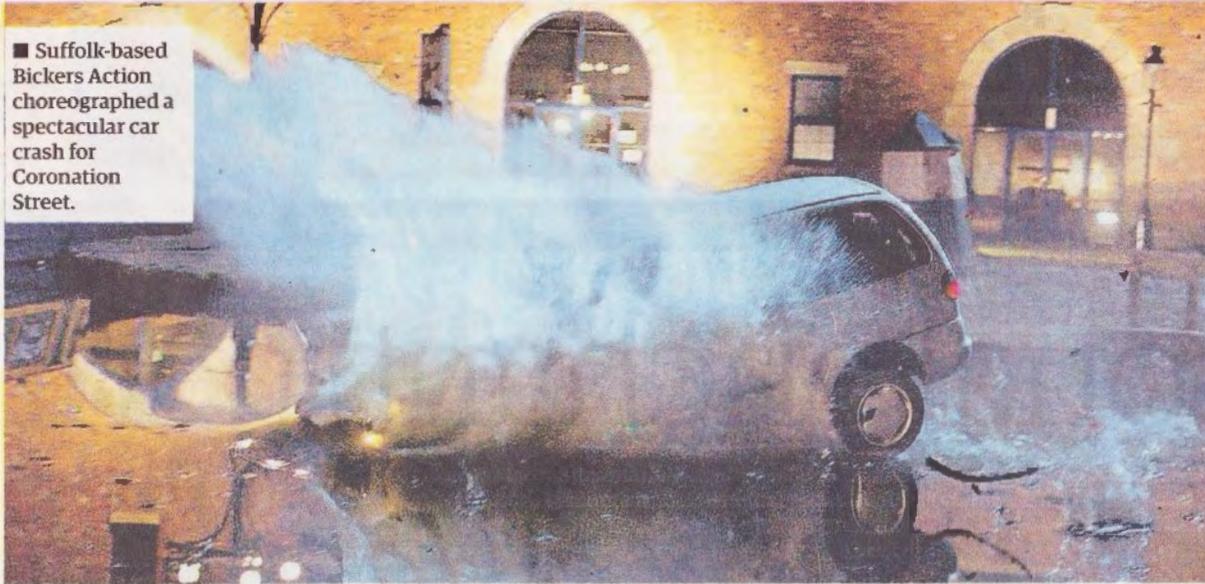


FEATURE EA Arts

■ Suffolk-based Bickers Action choreographed a spectacular car crash for Coronation Street.



Sharpening the focus on Suffolk as a 'one-stop shop' for filming



FOCUS ON Suffolk as a 'one-stop shop' for filming



■ Scenes from *Private Peaceful*, filmed on location in Suffolk. Inset right, Sarah Brown, from *Bentwater Parks*, talking at the ReCreate Regional Film Conference about the potential of the former RAF Bentwaters as a film production base.

Lights, camera, action! A new over-arching community organisation, FILM Suffolk, has been launched to boost the county's creative economy and tap the film-making potential of the region.

As theatre, music, dance and fine art continues to thrive and form the cornerstone of Suffolk's growing cultural reputation, local film-makers felt a little bit out in the cold and decided to do something about it.

Since the demise of ScreenEast in 2010, East Anglia has been without a regional body responsible for promoting the area to outside film companies and encouraging production from local professionals.

Last week more than 200 film professionals and academics came together at the Ipswich Film Theatre to host the first regional film conference, which was organised by the Ipswich-based ReCreate project, CSV Media and the fledgling FILM Suffolk.

The object of the day was to get professionals talking to one another and to boost Suffolk as a film-making centre. One of the ways this can be achieved is by FILM Suffolk acting as a central contact point for both film-makers within the area

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Cultural tourism is fast becoming a major driving force for local business. Arts editor **ANDREW CLARKE** spoke to independent film producer Julien Mery about the latest addition to Suffolk's creative economy

and from outside. Julien Mery, producer with Suffolk-based Livid Films, said that what Suffolk needed was this central point of contact so film-makers large and small could source locations and expert skills.

These could also open channels to agencies like Heritage Lottery Fund and the British Film Institute, and private investors who could help with finance. "The creative economy

is so important to Suffolk now and it is time that film was able to make an increased contribution."

The sentiment was echoed by Bryony Rudkin, portfolio holder for culture with Ipswich council, in her introduction to the film conference when she stressed "it is absolutely vital that the creative industry is at the heart of our economy."

Julien, a French-born, Ipswich-based film-maker, is a director of Livid Films along with screenwriter Matthew McGuchan and development consultant Matt Clarke.

The ReCreate conference brought together some of the leading voices from the film world to allow local film professionals to map out a plan of campaign.

Among the speakers were Neil McCartney, chairman of the Independent Film Trust, based in Cambridge; Sam Burton, from the Low Carbon Innovation Fund, which provides funds for companies that embrace low-carbon enterprises; Hayley Armstrong, from Creative England; Taff Gillingham, from Khaki Devils, on locations and specialist military support services; Sarah Brown, from Bentwater Parks, on film production facilities and location opportunities at the former US

airforce base, and Rebecca Watkins, from the Brighton-based Film Show and Tell collective, which fulfils a similar function to FILM Suffolk on the south coast.

Julien said one of the most valuable parts of the conference was the sessions with film-makers who had actually shot movies in Suffolk. Producer Guy de Beaujau spoke of shooting Michael Morpurgo's *Private Peaceful* at various locations, with the county being able to convincingly double for both Devon and Flanders. *Private Peaceful* is one of the bigger films to have been shot in the area. He said: "Our experience of filming in Suffolk was an extremely happy one. The biggest problem was that everyone here was trying to be too nice and too helpful."

The view of a home-grown film-maker was provided by Woodbridge-based director Daniel Simpson, who has just finished shooting *Hanger 10*, about the Rendlesham Forest UFO incident, and is cutting the film together and looking for a distributor to take it on.

Julien said the launch of FILM Suffolk was a major step forward to getting film firmly integrated into the cultural mix. "A lot of good material came from the conference, not least the fact that many

“What we would like is for FILM Suffolk to become a central point of contact for anyone interested in film-making in Suffolk.

independent film-makers got to meet one another, swap stories and information, and made useful contacts.” The establishment of FILM Suffolk would formalise those contacts and create a central resource for the information that had come to light.

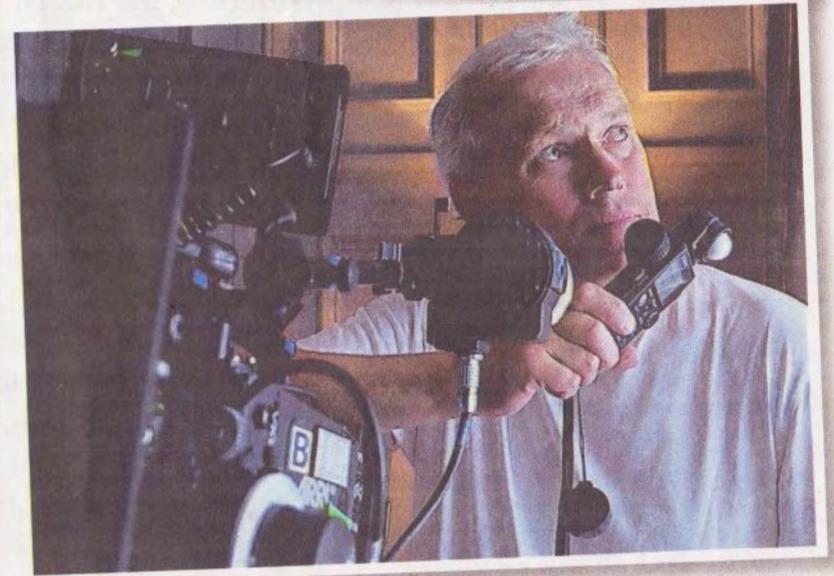
“What we would like is for FILM Suffolk to become a central point of contact for anyone interested in film-making in Suffolk. It's a community interest company. It is to be financially self-sufficient, no membership fee will be necessary and directors will actively seek sponsorship to improve the resources and facilities it can provide.

“Suffolk is little more than an hour away from one of the biggest production hubs in the world and we tend to lose local talent to the capital. Our aim is to create local



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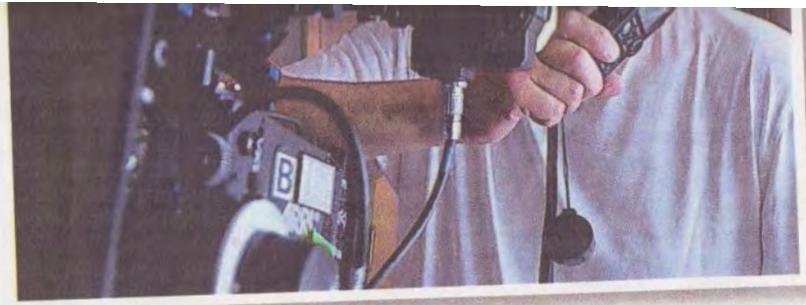


■ Top, a still from the film *Belly of the Wolf*, which was shot at Bentwaters Park. Above, Suffolk film cameraman and director of photography Steven Hall. **FILM** Suffolk wants to compile a directory of film professionals and services.

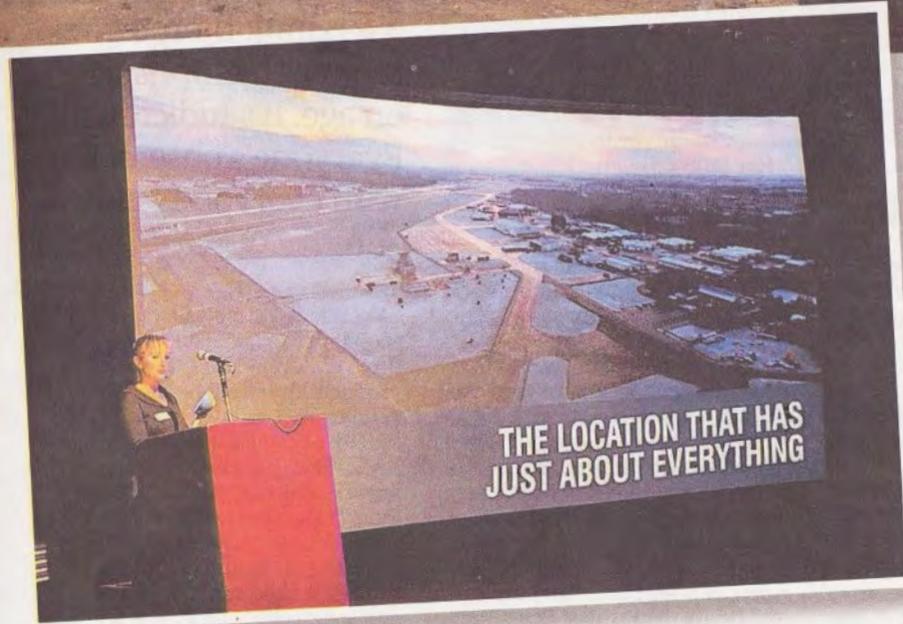
production database – a resource which is available to anyone wanting to shoot a film in Suffolk

and skills funds given out by local councils and colleges, or by private sponsorship. **FILM** Suffolk is also

"In the conference, Sarah



■ Top, a still from the film *Belly of the Wolf*, which was shot at Bentwaters Park. Above, Suffolk film cameraman and director of photography Steven Hall. FILM Suffolk wants to compile a directory of film professionals and services.



"In the conference, Sarah Brown, of Bentwater Parks, said it was heartbreaking to see productions that were ideally suited to this area going overseas. In the past we have had the Isle of Man doubling for Walberswick and Wingfield in the film of *I Capture the Castle* – how much better for it to be made here.

"There is a general consensus that we should have some studio space available. That would be a huge draw for visiting productions. Bentwaters already has a very large 30,000 square foot hangar available, already sound-proofed, but finding the right funding to turn this into a proper production facility has been tough – but we need to

emphasise to people, to councils, to funders, the rewards to the local economy can be enormous."

He said there are many industry professionals, like Bickers Action, cinematographers like Steven Hall and Vernon Layton, and directors like Daniel Simpson living and working in the county, along with other long-term residents like actors Bernard Hill, Bill Nighy, Diana Quick, Clive Owen and David Morrissey, as well as screenwriter Richard Curtis and director Paul Greengrass.

"What we need to do, and one of the immediate objectives of FILM Suffolk, is to establish a crew and

opportunities for talented young film-makers and seasoned professionals. We want to create a forum where skills and knowledge can be passed between the generations.

"Also, regions that feature as filming locations have been proven to attract increased investment and also boost tourism. FILM Suffolk can play an important role in the promotion of Suffolk on a national stage."

The long-term development plan for FILM Suffolk included a *Made in Suffolk* media-branding identity, support an annual Suffolk Film

Festival, hosting regular film-maker competitions and setting up a regional film office to attract productions to Suffolk.

"What we have to do is to offer practical support both for the local film-maker and for productions who are looking for interesting, well-resourced locations to film in.

"The council has indicated it is very supportive to visiting film productions and would not be adverse to closing roads to help facilitate filming, and we should bring location scouts to the region to show them what we have to offer.

production database – a resource which is available to anyone wanting to shoot a film in Suffolk – listing the availability of crew members, companies, specialist film services, locations... anything that can be sourced locally, including kit hire. We want to make Suffolk really attractive to film-makers and really easy for them to work here."

Other short-term goals include the establishment of a location guide to be run in collaboration with Creative England's own database. "We are anxious to really promote Suffolk," said Julien, "The more films are shot here, the greater potential for increased tourism as people seek out locations featured in their favourite films. FILM Suffolk will weigh in heavily on the promotional side, which is an activity that Creative England does not engage in."

Training was important, as was responding to the changing needs of the film industry. "We have to be part of the wider film world. We aim to stage film training events for existing film professionals, aspiring film-makers and students alike. We also are looking to create partnerships to provide the skills and the contacts to provide the right services for this region.

"We will be looking to not only provide workshops and courses but also talking to colleges and the local universities about the type of courses they are offering. Ideally, these courses are to be funded by the jobs

and skills funds given out by local councils and colleges, or by private sponsorship. FILM Suffolk is also hoping to offer Arts Award training for young people with a strong interest in the creative industry.

"But as the regional film conference demonstrated, it's important to talk and to listen to regional film professionals to see what support is required and how we can help one another. Anyone wanting to take an active role in FILM Suffolk can do so and help to make this county one of the leading players in screen productions."

He said Suffolk's credibility as a creative arts centre had never been stronger, with the on-going success of HighTide theatre festival, the Aldeburgh Festival, SPILL, PULSE and the new FlipSide arts event at Snape. "The wonderful work carried out on Grimes on the Beach demonstrates the set-making and production skills which would easily transfer to film set construction on location or in a studio.

"Sam Burton told the ReCreate conference that the filmed production reduced its carbon emissions by a staggering 50% and was the fund's first feature film investment. As a result, they are now welcoming more applications from film-makers in the region."

■ Details of FILM Suffolk can be found online at www.filmsuffolk.org.uk/