

ECC Report April 2024

£100,000 announced for community safety projects in Essex

We have launched a new grant scheme that aims to improve public safety in Essex.

Local groups can [apply](#) to the Community Safety Initiatives Fund. The fund aims to improve the safety of residents and address violence and vulnerability.

Grants will be awarded to local groups for projects or initiatives within their own communities.

These groups have the community links and local knowledge. This will help make sure the funding is used in the best way to benefit communities.

Grants from £500 up to £2,000 will be available. The fund is open to:

- voluntary and community organisations
- registered charities
- charitable incorporated organisations (CIO)
- not-for-profit companies limited by guarantee
- community interest companies (CIC)
- town, parish, or community councils

Groups will need to show that their projects will improve or promote public safety in their local community. The full criteria is available on application but projects will be considered that:

- prevent crime or reduce anti-social behaviour. Examples include improving home or personal safety or tackling crime in rural areas
- physically improve anti-social behaviour hotspots
- help improve safety in the night-time economy
- prevent people becoming involved with criminal behaviour or anti-social behaviour
- support local communities and encourage volunteering
- support community events for over 250 people

[Online applications](#) can be made until 11.45pm 12 May.

Step into spring with the safer, greener, healthier walking challenge

The third annual safer, greener, healthier walking challenge launched on 1st April. Anyone can sign up now and challenge to walk 35,000 steps a week or 5,000 steps a day. This year's challenge is called Step into Spring. It will run for six weeks until 12 May. One participant each week will be randomly selected to win an annual [Go Jauntly](#) Premium Membership. [Walking App - Go Jauntly - Discover walks, curate your own and share outdoor adventures](#)

There will also be three overall winners announced at the end of the challenge. Prizes will include:

- Gold - a Fitbit
- Silver - All4One £50 voucher
- Bronze - £25 Etsy voucher

Last year's challenge saw participants log over 213 million steps. That's the equivalent of collectively walking 162,550km.

63% of participants agreed the challenge encouraged them to walk more than they usually would. The challenge is part of our aim to see Essex become safer, greener and healthier.

We want to offer residents greater choices in how they travel. Be it walking, cycling or taking the bus or train.

You can [sign up for the challenge](#) any time within its six-week period.

Meadow planting puts Everyone's Essex into action

We set out five goals in [Everyone's Essex](#) to protect and improve our environment. They are:

- hit net zero targets
- deliver sustainable travel
- minimise waste
- foster green communities
- level up the environment

The [Essex Forest Initiative](#) is just one result of these aims. It is our commitment to plant over 375,000 trees in the county between 2019 and 2025.

This year, it saw a vast meadow planted on Mersea Island to rejuvenate natural habitats.

Councillor Peter Schwier, Climate Czar and Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling, helped plant 600 metres of hedgerows and 5,000 sq metres of shrubs outside the Essex Outdoors Mersea Centre.

He was joined by our Head of Climate Adaptation & Mitigation, John Meehan.

The meadow helps our aim to protect a third of natural areas around the River Blackwater and River Colne. These are areas identified in the [Essex Climate Focus Area](#).

It also supports [Biodiversity Net Gain](#). This initiative ensures natural habitats are in better state than before developments.

Councillor Schwier said: "I am delighted we have been able to begin the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain by creating what will be a beautiful natural meadow.

"This new meadow also helps us achieve our aims for the Essex Climate Focus Area, as well as our ambitious Essex Climate Action Plan.

“Essex County Council understands the importance of Biodiversity Net Gain and wants to lead the way for its delivery in Essex.”

You can now read our [Everyone’s Essex pledge refreshed for 2024/25](#). It details five key priorities, including the environment.

We promise to continue fostering a high-quality environment, achieving net-zero targets and minimising waste.

Give your views on dementia support services

We have launched an [online survey](#) to hear about your experiences with dementia. We also want to hear about your thoughts on support available.

Sharing your views will help shape dementia support services in the county. Current support includes:

- giving people the tools to remain independent, and as part of their community, for as long as possible.
- working with communities to ensure that they understand dementia.
- supporting communities to be inclusive of people living with, and affected by dementia.
- providing access to information and support that helps people adapt to a life with dementia.
- Helping individuals and families have the knowledge, confidence, and support networks to live independently.

We would particularly like to hear from people living with dementia, their families and carers, but anyone can take part.

The survey can be completed [online](#) until 13 June 2024.

For enquiries or for alternative ways to take part email dementia.team@essex.gov.uk

New Water Strategy for Essex

The first ever water strategy for Essex was launched on Wednesday 20th March at our Spring Climate Summit, held at the Baptist Church in Chelmsford.

Our strategy was developed in partnership with Water Resources East, water companies, regulators, farmers, environmental groups, and other interested parties. It outlines the current and future water issues facing Essex.

The strategy makes 30 recommendations on ways to:

- save water
- support land use change and increase natural green infrastructure

- develop new water supplies

All parties need to work together to make sure we have clean and plentiful water for the future. Alongside the strategy, [we have launched the Essex Water – Your Future online explorer tool](#). This interactive tool was created in partnership with the Young Essex Assembly and includes videos explaining the water challenges in Essex. It also explains what we can all do to help save water.

[Read the Water Strategy for Essex.](#)

New homes for former hospital site in Colchester

Construction has started on new homes at a former hospital site in Colchester.

The development, in Lexden Road, is being led by Essex Housing LLP. This is our housing development arm.

The former Essex County Hospital closed in November 2018.

The site occupies a prime location, within easy walking distance to the city centre. Through three-phases of development, the scheme will deliver 120 new homes. The Grade-II listed main hospital and other heritage assets will be restored.

Essex Housing obtained planning permission for the development in July 2020. Since then, extensive archaeology and enabling works have taken place. A ceremony yesterday (Monday 18 March) marked the start of phase one of the scheme. This will provide 63 high-quality new homes.

Find out more about [the Lexden Garden development](#).

More time to have your say on minerals development in Essex

We have extended the closing date for the consultation on the Replacement Essex Minerals Local Plan. It will now close on Tuesday 9 April.

We are required to publish a Minerals Local Plan. This provides policies for minerals development and identifies future sites for mineral extraction.

Councillor Lee Scott, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Planning a Growing Economy, said: Public interest in the Replacement Essex Minerals Local Plan has been very high and I'm pleased that we've moved to extend the deadline for responses, giving residents longer to feedback on the proposals. I would once again stress that no decisions on potential sites have been made at this stage and we will take the views of our communities into account as the Replacement Essex Minerals Local Plan is finalised.

[Take part in the consultation](#) before Tuesday 9 April.