

## [ECC Report May 2024](#)

### **Essex Highways' 2024 road resurfacing programme underway.**

Essex Highways has launched its 2024 road resurfacing programme. This will see improvements and upgrades to roads across the county.

Resurfacing will improve the condition of roads with deterioration caused by wet weather. It will also ensure that existing roads remain in good condition for longer.

Over the forthcoming months residents can expect to see more work being undertaken. Information about road closures will be made available in advance. This will allow residents and businesses time to plan ahead.

Essex Highways crews always try as hard as possible to minimise disruption. Residents are urged to be respectful to operatives carrying out repairs.

Find out more about [resurfacing works in Essex](#).

### **Essex Highways wraps up winter service**

Essex Highways is wrapping up its winter service following the wettest recorded winter in 130 years.

High levels of rainfall brought challenges such as frozen conditions and icy roads. And this winter crews have:

- carried out 80 gritting runs, spreading salt to melt away ice and stop it from forming hazards
- used over 10,000 tonnes of salt to keep roads ice-free and safe
- gritted approximately 40% of the total road network in Essex, over 2,000 miles
- deployed 55 gritting lorries, including 10 new ones, along with two mini gritters
- covered the 51 gritter routes, ensuring critical routes remained safe and accessible.

The county's gritters will return for the 2024/25 winter season later this year. This starts in late October when temperatures begin to cool.

And as reported above Essex Highways is now preparing for spring and summer to focus on the re-surfacing season.

Find out more about [Essex Highways' winter service](#).

### **£12 million funding boost for Essex Highways**

Essex County Council has allocated an extra £12 million for priority work on our highways.

Over £8 million of this will go towards new crews who will prioritise repairs raised by local councillors.

The money will also be used to increase our enforcement team. This team can challenge landowners where overgrown vegetation is dangerous. The extra funding will be spent in different areas of the county.

Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport, said:

I know how much pride Essex residents take in where they live, so I'm pleased to announce this additional investment for our highways. Not only will the funding mean we can carry out more priority repairs and maintenance work, but it will also allow us to bring forward some of our surfacing and patching schemes.

Nearly double the number of potholes were repaired across Essex last year compared to the previous year. This again was thanks to additional funding from the council and the hard work of our crews. I look forward to building on our strong track record with this new funding heading into the next financial year."

This extra funding for highways is part of our 2024/25 budget plan. It sets out how we will spend the more than £2 billion we are responsible for across four areas. These are:

- the economy
- the environment
- children and families
- health, care and wellbeing for all ages

Councillor Kevin Bentley, Leader of the council, said:

We will never stop doing our best for the people of Essex, it's what they deserve. We have shown this as an administration time and again by protecting essential services and through our continued investment in areas such as the county's infrastructure, our outstanding children's services and our work to Level Up opportunities and reduce inequalities.

I am immensely proud of the work that the council has done over the last three years to make good the promises we set out. And I am hugely optimistic about what we can achieve over the next twelve months to go even further in the pursuit of these ambitions."

Councillor Chris Whitbread, Chancellor of Essex, said:

We are one of the highest performing councils in the country and continue to invest in new services where many other authorities are having to reduce their spending. I am proud that we have once again achieved a balanced budget. This hasn't happened by chance and is testament to our strong track record in financial management and our desire to put people at the heart of our decision-making.

Our latest budget is rooted in what residents have told us is most important to them. As a result, we have a budget that will enable us to continue to protect the most vulnerable, level up opportunities and deliver our ambitious capital programme.

We must not be complacent, however, and due to the significant pressures facing local government, increasing Council Tax this year has unfortunately been unavoidable. We know there will be more difficult decisions to make in the future too. We must therefore continue to act responsibly on behalf of and for the people of Essex."

[Read more about our 2024/25 budget.](#)

***Is your home phone ready to go digital?***

The UK's telephone network is changing. By 2025, traditional phone lines will be replaced by a digital landline service. This means that calls will be made over a broadband line.

For most people, this change will be straightforward. Before your phone line changes, your telephone provider will contact you. Depending on your provider, this could be a letter, text, email, postcard or leaflet.

It's important to respond to your provider and discuss what you need to do to keep using your phone line.

### **Who isn't affected by the switchover?**

Nothing will change if you:

- do not have a landline
- only use mobile phones in your home
- already use a digital phone line

### **How to make sure your landline stays switched on**

#### **If you already have broadband set up at home**

This should be a simple change. Your home phone will be plugged into your broadband router instead of the wall-mounted socket. You will also keep your phone number.

#### **If you do not already have broadband set up at home**

To continue using your landline, you will need to switch to a digital phone line. Your telephone provider should contact you to let you know what you need to do to make sure your service isn't affected. If you have any concerns, contact your telephone provider.

### **When to contact your telephone provider**

If any of the following apply to you, or someone you know, contact your telephone provider.

- you do not use broadband at home
- you use a personal alarm or healthcare device
- you have additional needs
- you live in an area with no mobile signal
- you have concerns or questions about what you need to do to make sure your phone line isn't affected

Your telephone provider will tell you what you need to do to keep using your phone line, and help you take extra steps to prepare.

### **How do I find out who my telephone provider is?**

To find out who your telephone provider is, check your phone bill. Your bill should include the provider's name and contact details. If you have recently moved into a property and are not sure who provides the land line, you can dial 150 to find out.

### **Frequently asked questions (FAQs)**

## **I have already told my provider that I have a personal alarm and/or additional needs - do I need to do anything else?**

You do not need to do anything else if your telephone provider already knows you have additional needs, use a personal alarm/healthcare device or are vulnerable.

Your provider will contact you before anything changes.

## **What will happen during a power cut if I have a digital phone line?**

Digital phone lines rely on a power supply, so if there is a power cut, you will need to use a mobile phone. If your area has poor mobile signal, or you have no mobile phone for emergency calls, your provider will give a solution to allow calls to be made in emergencies.

## **Are there any costs for the switchover?**

Your telephone provider will not ask for money to switch you to a digital line. Be aware of fraud – if you receive any requests for money, report it on the [Action Fraud website](#) or call 0300 123 2040.

## **Where can I get more information from?**

If you have concerns or questions about the switch to a digital phone line, contact your telephone provider.

You can also find information on the [Which](#) and the [Gov.uk](#) websites.

**BETA** Help us improve this site by [giving feedback](#)

### ***Help with your broadband bills***

At a time when living costs are reaching record highs, several broadband providers are offering special discounted deals to help people receiving benefits to stay connected.

Could you save up to £202 a year on your broadband bills?

If you're a low-income family receiving Universal Credit or other benefits, you could be eligible for a social broadband tariff and save up to £202 a year on your broadband bills.

Who's eligible for a broadband social tariff?

If you receive one of the following benefits, you may be eligible for a social tariff:

- Universal Credit
- Pension Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support

Watch the video below to hear about social broadband tariffs and how important they are. <https://youtu.be/tax2msY7tJA>

What's on offer?

Several broadband providers are offering low-cost broadband deals to eligible residents in Essex.

These include:

- BT Home Essentials – starting at £15 a month, plus £9.99 P&P
- Connect Fibre Basic Essentials - £20 a month
- Hyperoptic Fair Fibre Plan – starting at £15 a month
- NOW Broadband Basics – £20 a month
- Sky Broadband Basics – £20 a month
- Virgin Media O2 Essential broadband – £12.50 a month
- Virgin Media O2 Essential broadband plus – £20 a month
- Vodafone Essentials Broadband - £20 a month
- TalkTalk – free broadband for six months for jobseekers on Universal Credit who don't have an internet connection (contact your Jobcentre Plus work coach)
- YouFibre 50 - £15 a month
- County Broadband's Essential broadband tariff - £15 a month
- VOXI For Now - £10 a month
- EE Basics – £12 a month

Please be aware that some offers may not be available at your address. For full details of each deal, visit the provider's website.

### **If you're not eligible**

If you don't meet the criteria for a discounted deal, but still want to save money on your broadband, we have some great tips to [help you find a cheaper broadband deal](#). There are also [free skills courses and other digital support](#) available across Essex.

### **Primary school offers day 2024**

15,862 Essex parents and carers have found out the outcome of their primary school applications.

This year, the highest ever percentage of Essex parents are being offered a place at one of their preferred of primary schools.

### **Here are the figures for 2024:**

- First preference – 91.27%
- Second preference – 5.54%
- Third preference – 1.39%
- Fourth preference – 0.41%
- 1.39% of pupils have been offered a place at the nearest school with a place available

Those who applied online will receive confirmation by email or by visiting [our admissions website](#). Find out more about [school place planning in Essex](#).

### **Secondary School offers 2024**

Parents of 17,039 Essex pupils are discovering the outcome of their

Secondary school applications today (Friday 1 March).

This is the highest number of applications we have ever received.

In total, just under 97% are being offered one of their named preferences of secondary school.

**The full breakdown of figures is:**

- 84.14% offered 1st preference school
- 8.65% offered 2nd preference school
- 2.28% offered 3rd preference school
- 0.96% offered 4th preference school
- 0.49% offered 5th preference school
- 0.23% offered 6th preference school
- 3.25% could not be offered any of their preferences and have been offered a place at the nearest school with space

This year, 99% of families applied online and will receive their offer by email or by logging onto the council's website.

Councillor Tony Ball, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability, said:

I am really pleased to see that, once again, we have been able to offer so many pupils their parents' preferred secondary school place this year.

Starting secondary school is a hugely important milestone in a child's life and I hope those embarking on this exciting next step enjoy their last few months at primary and junior school before starting their next academic adventure.

Find out more about [school admissions in Essex](#).