

ECC Report April 2021

Local businesses are ready to welcome you back

Local businesses are ready and looking forward to welcoming you back safely is the message from ECC's Love Local campaign as the county prepares to reopen under the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

From Monday 12th April, under the Government's roadmap out of lockdown, businesses such as shops, hairdressers and gyms have re-opened. Hospitality such as pubs and restaurants can open in outdoors areas and outdoor visitor attractions can reopen.

Retailers have put in place a wide range of measures so customers can be assured that they can shop safely. Measures include hand sanitising stations, limits on the number of customers in store at any one time, markings on the floor to indicate safe queuing and protective screens at the tills.

The Director of Sustainable Growth at Essex County Council said that this year has been one of the toughest for local businesses and they have faced enormous challenges. Many have adapted, showing great initiative and entrepreneurship in very difficult circumstances. Our rallying call to Essex residents is clear - come and show your support for local businesses as they reopen safely.

Shopping locally supports local jobs, helps the local economy to thrive and bolsters local supply chains. It can also help to cut your carbon footprint by reducing unnecessary travel and making the most of locally sourced products and ingredients.

For information and ideas about how you can Love Local and support local businesses visit www.essex.gov.uk/love-local

Waste collection workers and recycling centre site staff across Essex are facing an increasing amount of abuse

"We go to work to provide an essential service and like everybody else we deserve to be safe, not threatened or insulted."

Waste collection workers and recycling centre site staff across Essex are facing an increasing amount of abuse from drivers and members of the public.

Front line staff are regularly reporting incidents of threats, abuse and impatient drivers ignoring traffic management arrangements. In some cases, this has resulted in dangerous driving to avoid queues – putting workers and other road users at risk. Some members of the public are also not following the social distancing guidance and are putting our workers at risk.

A Spokesman for Environment and Climate Change Action said that staff working at recycling centres and collecting household waste are key workers who are providing an essential service. The public is being asked to follow published guidance and to treat workers with respect. Action will be taken and ban any residents that do not adhere to the rules or abuse the staff.

Essex County Council and Love Essex are asking members of the public to:

- Respect our waste collection workers and recycling centre site staff – abusive behaviour, threats and bad language will not be tolerated. Continue to follow social distancing rules, and do not attempt to put your waste in the kerbside collection vehicles yourselves.
- Consider that our staff are key workers who are working hard to continue providing an essential service in difficult circumstances.
- Remember that site rules and restrictions are in place for the health and safety of both the site staff and members of the public. Health and safety is our top priority.
- Please also consider whether your journey is necessary or if you could use an alternative method to dispose of your waste.
- If you do need to visit a recycling centre, then please try to visit outside of peak times. Weekdays or later in the afternoon are usually quieter.

For further information on recycling centres and site restrictions, please visit www.loveessex.org/siterestrictions

Kickstart Essex launch: ECC to work with DWP and local businesses to help reduce youth unemployment arising from the Coronavirus pandemic

ECC has responded to the Government's landmark Kickstart scheme and have been approved by DWP as a flagship Gateway provider.

The Kickstart Essex team will support employers to access the scheme which will provide them funding to offer a young person a six-month Kickstart job.

ECC will work alongside DWP and local employers to support the creation of 600 opportunities for 16-24-year olds in receipt of universal credit, and who have been the most affected age group in the current economic climate.

We are delighted to have the chance to help create exciting opportunities for our young people in a challenging employment market and support Essex employers to attract new talent into their organisations.

Prior to launching, we have already received over 250 Kickstart job offers from 100 businesses in a variety of industries. There are some exciting opportunities for young people

in Essex already and these will increase as our economy is able to re-open over the coming months.

Under the Government's Kickstart scheme, employers will offer young adults eligible for the scheme work opportunities for six months, which will be funded by Central Government.

The wage costs of up to 25 hours per week paid at National Minimum Wage (dependent on age), National Insurance contributions and minimum employer auto enrolment pension contributions will be funded by Central Government. A £1500 grant is also available to support the young adults and help them move into sustained employment after they have completed their Kickstart funded job.

Under the scheme, ECC will employ 100 young people directly and will be a gateway for 500 jobs with Essex employers. ECC will offer wraparound support to help young adults build on their existing skills and move in to sustained employment.

Essex County Council has been preparing for months to offer businesses a free wraparound service for the kickstart scheme.

Kickstart Essex aims to ensure that employers and young people benefit from the scheme and have a positive experience. Prior to launch, a Kickstart team was assembled to develop a support package for businesses, our team consists of specialist Youth Caseworkers who will work closely with employers, facilitating access to Kickstart candidates via DWP and appropriate training and support for young participants.

A spokesman for Economic Development, said that ECC is committed to supporting residents and local businesses.

The Kickstart Essex project will help many employers offer jobs to young adults who could bring new insight and talent to the organisation. It will aid young adults to develop a new career and learn fresh skills; it is envisaged that some placements may result in long term opportunities.

When the Chancellor announced the Kickstart scheme, the council was quick to mobilise and apply to be a Gateway for us to help many Essex employers benefit from this Government initiative"

If you are unemployed, aged 16-24 and claiming universal credit, you should ask your Work Coach at Jobcentre Plus to see what job opportunities are available nearby.

ECC would be happy to hear from Essex employers interested in offering Kickstart job opportunities under the scheme. For more information please contact the Kickstart Essex Team at kickstartessex@essex.gov.uk

Ports boost renews focus on vital plans for dual carriageway

The need to upgrade a major road across Essex has been heightened by the Government's approval of special status for two East Coast ports.

Harwich and Felixstowe were jointly named as one of eight Freeports across the country; this was announced by the Chancellor in his budget speech on 12th March which will greatly boost both ports in their ability to attract trade and grow their operations.

His move to allow the creation of Freeport East immediately focussed attention on the A120, one of the major routes across Essex, which leads to Harwich, provides a link to Felixstowe, and has been the subject of a long-running campaign to improve it.

Highways England is currently progressing plans for a dual-carriageway upgrade of the road from Braintree to the A12, while ECC Deputy Leader recently raised the need to start planning for similar improvements to the section of the road from **Hare Green, Gt. Bromley to Harwich**.

He said that the creation of Freeport East paves the way for a major economic boost to the area and to maximise this we need a transport network that matches the ambition.

It is well known that the A120, the only single carriageway road in the country with an airport at one end and an international port at the other, is woefully unfit for purpose.

Every day businesses endure costly delays and have to deal with unreliable journey times caused by congestion and accidents on the road which is one of just three east-west routes in the east of England, yet a key economic growth corridor.

As the benefits of Freeport status begin to take effect this situation will only get worse and we must not take our eye off the vital need to upgrade the A120.

Highways England is working to come up with a preferred route for a new dual carriageway between **Harwich and Hare Green, Gt. Bromley** early next year. This follows ECC selecting a route between Braintree and Kelvedon as its favoured option after public consultation demonstrated four out of five people agreed there was a need to upgrade the road.

The planning work for the Braintree to A12 dual carriageway scheme demonstrated an economic benefit of £2.2 billion through new jobs, business, and housing together with a dramatic improvement in road safety.

Couple this with the benefits of Freeport East plus new opportunities from the conclusion of Brexit and the economic advantages are plain for all to see, particularly if we can also begin planning an upgrade between **Hare Green, Gt. Bromley and Harwich**, a section of the road described locally as no better than a 'farm track'.

Bright future for physical activity in Essex

Four years ago, Active Essex launched an ambitious strategy to change one million lives, by tackling the issues around inactivity in Greater Essex. Covid-19 has given us all a huge wake up call, and physical activity has been, and remains, a key priority for Essex residents.

The Active Partnership for Greater Essex, Active Essex, has today launched a four-year Impact Report to showcase the outstanding achievements by the team and their many partners.

It reflects the breadth and depth of their programmes and highlights the impact they have had on the sport and physical activity sector in Greater Essex, to ensure residents have had the opportunities to remain active.

It is forecast that a record total of 988,287 adults, according to Public Health Data, in Greater Essex are now carrying out the recommended 150 minutes of exercise each week, as stated by the Chief Medical Officer.

In addition, 112,600 children and young people are also meeting the recommended 60 minutes of exercise per day.

This report can be viewed online here: www.activeesseximpact.org

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Active Essex has seen physical activity levels drop, but continue to remain committed to ensure physical activity remains one of the highest priorities for the health and wellbeing of all communities across the county.

The Director of Public Health for Essex County Council, said that physical activity has never been more important, and this has been reinforced by Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty many times during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The content shown in the Active Essex Impact Report, shows the impact that physical activity has had on the lives of residents here in Essex and provides extensive evidence as to why this needs to continue to be a priority.

The Impact Report showcases stories and achievements from each of the 14 locality areas. Active Essex have worked hard to build relationships, support individuals and worked alongside groups, who have played a pivotal role in helping reduce inactivity within our communities.

This has been particularly prevalent among individuals living with long term health conditions and disabilities, as well as women, young people, and those from diverse ethnic communities. The Covid-19 pandemic has unfortunately deepened inequalities and therefore Active Essex's role has been fundamental, especially in the past year.

The work of Active Essex has been enhanced through the Active Essex Foundation and the Essex Local Delivery Pilot, which has significantly contributed to the fantastic achievements set out in the Impact Report.

The Active Essex Foundation has allowed Active Essex to infiltrate physical activity into many different environments ensuring young people have the best start to life, whilst the Local Delivery Pilot has turbo charged their work in tackling physical inactivity in the most disadvantaged communities.

Azeem Akhtar, Chairman of Active Essex said that progress has still been made in the most challenging of circumstances. The future for physical activity and sport in Greater Essex is

bright due to the magnificent work of all the clubs, volunteers, organisations, and system leaders. We look forward to working cohesively in our upcoming new strategy and are all fully committed to ensuring everyone has the opportunity to be active for a healthier Greater Essex.

As we begin to emerge from the pandemic and look towards the road to recovery, physical activity has been put high on the agenda to help recondition residents who have been most affected by Covid-19.

With national partner, Sport England having set the direction of travel for the sector with their recent release of “Uniting the Movement”, in summer 2021, Active Essex will be launching their new 10-year strategy to drive Sport and Physical Activity across Greater Essex. They look forward to working cohesively with partners and stakeholders, strengthening communities to implement this and provide physical activity and sport opportunities for everyone.