ECC Report July 2018

Cash prize for schools which love their clothes

School children across Essex have raised over £3,700 for their schools by donating over nine tonnes of old clothes to be recycled.

The competition, run by Bag2School in partnership with Recycle for Essex, saw 37 schools take part with the winning school, Rickling C of E Primary School, Uttlesford, collecting the equivalent of 2.57 kg of clothes per pupil.

To celebrate this big achievement, the school has won a free upcycling session run by local artist Connie Flynn, and during the session pupils learned how old fabric and clothing could be used to make new items.

After taking some time to look at examples of upcycled fabric put together by Connie, the pupils had a go at using cut up old clothes to put together their own patchwork artwork.

Every household in Essex throws away the equivalent of 36 woolly jumpers each year, but recycling old clothes and textiles is becoming easier.

Many districts and boroughs in Essex offer kerbside collections, all recycling centres accept textiles, along with the many textile banks located all around the county.

All clean clothing and textiles can be recycled, even items that are ripped or have holes in.

Councillor Simon Walsh, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Waste offered his congratulations to schools taking part in the competition, saying that this competition has been a fun new way to encourage pupils and parents to learn about the value of recycling their clothes.

He congratulated all the schools who took part, for encouraging young people in Essex to understand the principle of recycling.

To find out more visit recycleforessex.com

The two Schools who took park in our district were

Alton Park Junior School (Tendring)
Manningtree High School (Tendring)

Connie Flynn is based at the Parndon Mill and more information about her work can be found here: http://www.parndonmill.co.uk/textiles/connie-flynn

Make mischief at Essex Libraries during the Summer Reading Challenge

Children are being encouraged to unearth the Beanotown buried treasure in Essex Libraries this summer by taking part in Mischief Makers – this year's Summer Reading Challenge.

The UK's biggest annual reading initiative is delivered by The Reading Agency and Essex Libraries, who have partnered with *Beano* this year to help improve child literacy during the summer holidays when reading levels typically drop.

Reading just six books will help children earn their Mischief Makers certificate and medal. Along the way they'll also collect stickers (including some special smelly stickers) which will help them find the buried treasure on their Beanotown map - available from all Essex libraries.

Those aged 10 and over can also get creative by joining in with ImagiNation 2018 to help their library make fantastic book displays by creating artwork or reviews inspired by the books they have read.

Cllr Susan Barker, Essex County Council's Cabinet member for Customer and Corporate, said that she was pleased to once again being able to deliver the Summer Reading Challenge to Essex families.

Reading is extremely important in helping children develop their language and communication skills and also a great way of supporting them to maintain these skills outside of term time.

More than 46,000 families are expected to visit Essex Libraries as part of this year's Summer Reading Challenge which is free and runs from Saturday 14 July until Saturday 1 September in all Essex Libraries, including mobile libraries.

Reading Well for Mental Health

Another excellent reading initiative will encourage Essex residents how to learn to better understand and manage their mental health by reading books endorsed by medical experts and people with mental health needs.

Essex Libraries, again working in partnership with the Reading Agency and Society of Chief Librarians, has launched a new and revamped version of the acclaimed Reading Well Books on Prescription programme.

Now named Reading Well for Mental Health, the new booklist contains 37 titles, ranging from popular memoirs and self-help books to tried and tested classics that health professionals turn to every day.

Backed by Public Health England, the Royal College of General Practitioners and NHS England, the titles covers a variety of common mental health conditions, such as anger, bereavement, low self-esteem, social anxiety and shyness, sleep problems, stress depression, panic, obsessions and compulsions.

Binge eating, bulimia nervosa, body image and body dysmorphic disorder, mood swings, post-natal depression and support for carers are also covered.

Libraries as a space are often considered great welcoming places, sources of solace for people with mental health conditions. It's important that not only can people find refuge in libraries but that they can also find the tools to help themselves.

Reading any book can have a positive impact on mental health, and these books which have been chosen by health experts, are endorsed by national health organisations, and it will greatly help people to better understand, and confidently self-manage their mental health.

Have a look at Essex Libraries website for a full list of the books or pop in and ask a member of staff.

- The collection will be available in 22 libraries (Basildon, Billericay, Braintree, Brentwood, Canvey, Chelmsford, Clacton, Colchester, Greenstead, Hadleigh, Harlow, Harwich, Laindon, Loughton, Maldon, Rayleigh, Saffron Walden, Shenfield, South Woodham Ferrers, Waltham Abbey, Wickford and Witham) but titles can be reserved and sent to any library in Essex.
- Three other schemes under the umbrella of Reading Well cover mental health and wellbeing for young adults (Shelf Help), dementia and long term health conditions.
- The collections are part of a national scheme developed by The Reading Agency.

https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/quick-guides/reading-well/

Programme to improve Essex's historic woodlands

Essex County Council is to begin a programme of improvements to their woodland estates. The programme is part of a long-term plan which aims to improve the habitats for insects, birds and mammals and a host of wildflowers associated with

traditional woodland. It will also help conserve the historic character of the woodlands, many of which are designated as Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The work will take place at woodlands across Essex: Barnston Hall Estate, Beaumont Estate, Belhus Woods Country Park, Boyles Court Estate, Chalkney Wood, Codham Hall Estate, Danbury Country Park, Partridge Green Estate and Thorndon Country Park.

Before starting work, the area will be surveyed for potential bat roosts and nesting birds and these will be protected where necessary. Safety notices will be erected for members of the public. Tracks and paths will then be opened up to help walking or cycling, and to support butterflies and spring flowers that require light open areas. Traditional woodland management techniques which have been used for centuries will be used to reduce over-crowding and improve habitats for special wildlife. This will include thinning[1] and coppicing[2]. In some woodlands temporary deer fences will be erected to prevent damage to coppiced trees.

Planning for woodland management involves taking a long-term vision as trees take a long time to grow and mature. What might appear as upheaval after woodland work in fact provides new opportunities for scarce and threatened wildlife including iconic spring flowers such as the bluebell and woodland butterflies and birds.

Essex County Council is working with environmental specialists Place Services[3] to manage the programme and it is also kindly supported by Ground Control[4] who are providing sponsorship and volunteers to help look after the woodlands. Some of the timber from the felled trees will be sold at Essex Country Parks as firewood with any income raised contributing towards the costs of maintaining the woodland estate.

For full details of the work being carried out at each of the woodlands visit www.essexwoodlandproject.org/woodlands

1. Thinning refers to the selective removal of trees in order to improve the quality and growth of those remaining. Thinning can also help with the removal of non-native species and improving the health of the remaining trees.

   2. Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management which exploits many species' ability to grow new shoots from their stumps or roots. A coppiced wood is one that is cut periodically and the trees are allowed to regrow from the cut stumps, which are termed stools.

   3. Place Services is a leading provider of integrated environmental assessment, planning, design and management services. It is a traded service of Essex County Council.

4. Ground Control is one of the UK's leading external maintenance and commercial landscaping providers, based in Billericay, Essex. Services include grounds maintenance, Arboricultural works, landscape construction, gritting and snow clearance, ecology and much more.

Route D named favoured route option for upgraded A120

Businesses, residents and road users have been urged to "unite behind a shared vision for an improved A120" after Essex County Council announced the favoured route option for the key route.

Two weeks ago Cllr Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader at Essex County Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, announced option D as the Council's favoured route option for a new dual carriageway between Braintree and the A12.

The announcement follows a public consultation in which more than four out of five (82%) respondents agreed that this section of the A120 needed to be completely upgraded to a dual carriageway.

The proposed route would see Galleys Corner transformed leading onto a dual carriageway road joining the A12 at junction 23 just south of Kelvedon.

At an event at Earls Colne Golf Club, Cllr Bentley said: "I truly believe that route option D offers the best solution to the problems of the current A120 between Braintree and the A12.

"Our study work has demonstrated that for every £1 million spent on improving the A120, residents, road users and businesses will see £3,750,000 in benefits. Route D also delivers up to 15 minutes in journey time savings.

"The current single-carriageway road is not fit for purpose and is often heavily congested, causing major issues, not only for drivers and businesses in Essex, but also those helping to fuel the UK economy through our nearby international ports and airports.

"Now is when the real work begins. This scheme is competing with dozens across the country for Government funding so it is vital that everyone unites behind a shared vision for an improved A120.

“Please make your voice heard and make sure the Government knows just how important this road improvement is to the future of Essex, East Anglia and the economic future of the country.”

It is important to highlight that all work undertaken by ECC is advisory; a preferred route announcement for the A120 can only be made by Highways England in association the Department for Transport.

Following the favoured route announcement, and having cleared the Council’s statutory call-in period, it has been recommended to Highways England and the Department for Transport for funding within the Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS 2). This is a funding period lasting between 2020 and 2025. An announcement on whether the scheme has been successful is expected next year (2019).

If it is funded, the newly upgraded A120 between Braintree and the A12 could be open as soon as 2026.

For more information on the A120 Braintree to A12 scheme, please visit www.a120essex.co.uk.

Council gives the green light to increased fees, support and training for Essex foster carers

In recognition of the life changing work foster carers do with local children, the Essex County Council Fostering service is set to significantly increase its fees, support and training package for foster carers.

The decision will make becoming a foster carer a more financially viable option for more people in the county and brings Essex in line with the fees paid by neighbouring local authorities and independent fostering agencies.

The increased fees, when combined with the weekly allowance which foster carers receive for each child in their care, mean that from 1 October 2018, foster carers can expect to receive up to £479 a week for each child they care for. A foster carer on a specialist therapeutic scheme will receive up to £600 a week.

Aligned to this are service improvements including dedicated resources to manage initial enquiries, specialist therapeutic support for all foster carers – clinical psychologists and mental health coordinators in each quadrant – respite and peer support for foster carers and a reward and recognition programme.

There will also be increased opportunities for existing carers to be supported financially to extend their homes to provide increased capacity to care for more children.

Phase two of the project will also look at the use of digital options to enhance the marketing of fostering, to ensure immediate and positive response to enquiries and improve the experience of current foster carers. This will include a case management portal for foster carers and social work staff and implementation of an online expenses system for in-house foster carers.

Councillor Dick Madden, Essex County Council's Cabinet member for Children and Families, said: "We are delighted to be able to reward our foster carers with a new financial package and increased support and training. We know that stable foster placements provide the best experience for children in care and investing in our own in-house fostering service ensures we continue to support carers to provide the best outcomes for local children

"We need more local carers so we can meet the needs of children in Essex, in their own communities and our aim is to ensure as many of our young people as possible are well-matched with Essex's own foster carers and can benefit from the excellent support networks we provide".

For more information about the new scheme and to find out how to register your interest to become a foster carer please visit www.essexadoptionandfostering.co.uk or call 0800 801 530.