

ECC Report December 2020

Vaccine

I am sure that we are all by now aware of the great news that a Vaccine against the Corona Virus was given the green light by the Regulator earlier today. At this present time ECC does not have any further information on what role it will play, but as and when the position will be clearer I will distribute any relevant information.

Coronavirus – Covid-19

As England comes out of the latest Coronavirus Lockdown on the 2nd December, we now know that the whole of our county (and most of England) will be placed into Tier Two. The below is a brief bullet point list of restrictions which we are all asked to follow from the 2nd:

As you are aware the rules change for a brief period over the Christmas period, after which all areas revert to the previous tier restrictions.

Tier Two:

- You must not socialise with anyone you do not live with or who is not in your support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place
- You must not socialise in a group of more than 6 people outside, including in a garden or a public space – this is called the ‘rule of 6’
- Businesses and venues can continue to operate, in a COVID-Secure manner, other than those which remain closed by law, such as nightclubs
- Pubs and bars must close, unless operating as restaurants. Hospitality venues can only serve alcohol with substantial meals
- Hospitality businesses selling food or drink for consumption on their premises are required to:
 - Provide table service only, in premises which sell alcohol
 - Close between 11pm and 5am (hospitality venues in airports, ports, transport services and motorway service areas are exempt)
 - Stop taking orders after 10pm
- Hospitality businesses and venues selling food and drink for consumption off the premises can continue to do so after 10pm as long as this is through delivery service, click-and-collect or drive-through
- Early closure (11pm) applies to casinos, cinemas, theatres, museums, bowling alleys, amusement arcades, funfairs, theme parks, adventure parks

and activities, and bingo halls. Cinemas, theatres and concert halls can stay open beyond 11pm in order to conclude performances that start before 10pm

- Public attendance at outdoor and indoor events (performances and shows) is permitted, limited to whichever is lower: 50% capacity, or either 2,000 people outdoors or 1,000 people indoors
- Public attendance at spectator sport and business events can resume inside and outside, subject to social contact rules and limited to whichever is lower: 50% capacity, or either 2,000 people outdoors or 1,000 people indoors
- Places of worship remain open but you must not socialise with people from outside of your household or support bubble while you are indoors there, unless a legal exemption applies
- Weddings and funerals can go ahead with restrictions on numbers of attendees – 15 people can attend wedding ceremonies and receptions, 30 people can attend funeral ceremonies, and 15 people can attend linked commemorative events such as wakes or stone-settings.
- Organised outdoor sport, and physical activity and exercise classes can continue
- Organised indoor sport, physical activity and exercise classes will only be permitted if it is possible for people to avoid mixing with people they do not live with (or share a support bubble with). There are exceptions for indoor disability sport, sport for educational purposes and supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s, which can take place with larger groups mixing
- You can continue to travel to venues or amenities which are open, but should aim to reduce the number of journeys you make where possible
- If you live in a tier 2 area, you must continue to follow tier 2 rules when you travel to a tier 1 area. Avoid travel to or overnight stays in tier 3 areas other than where necessary, such as for work, education, youth services, to receive medical treatment, or because of caring responsibilities. You can travel through a tier 3 area as a part of a longer journey
- For international travel see the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice for your destination and the travel corridors list.

The below table shows the latest relevant published infection rates per 100,000 head of population, in our local area (as writing).

Date	Tendring %	Colchester %	Essex %
29.10.2020	58.7	101.2	98.6
05.11.2020	60.7	104.3	106.0
12.11.2020	58.0	95.0	141.2
19.11.2020	72.3	77.6	151.7

Extract from Public Health England Report

Data shows sharp rise in the Covid-19 infection rate in Basildon, particularly among school age children and younger people

Young people in Basildon are being urged to follow guidance on social distancing following a recent rise in levels of infection in the area.

Parents are also being asked to make sure their children are aware of the current guidance and following this while in and outside of schools and education settings.

The latest data published by Public Health England has revealed a sharp increase in the case rate, with Basildon now having one of the highest rates nationally at over 285 cases per 100,000.

Infection is particularly prevalent in the 10-18 year age group (secondary school age children and younger adults) with data suggesting up to 40% of cases may be related to schools. However, it is important to note that those that have tested positive, and included in school figures, may have been infected outside of education environments.

Councillor John Spence, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, said that the rise in coronavirus in Basildon is a sobering reminder that there is still work to be done to contain the spread.

Basildon residents, and particularly families with school age children or young adults at home, need to be more careful than ever to help us halt this rise.

Even though we have now come out of the second lockdown, the advice from the Dr Mike Gogarty, Essex Director of Public Health is still to

1. Work from home wherever you can.
2. Stay 2m apart from other people.
3. Always assume the person you are near may be infected.
4. If you have any symptoms of Coronavirus, please self-isolate and get a test straight away.
5. If you come into contact with a positive case, you should also self-isolate and if offered a test via local Track and Trace, make sure you take it – this could reduce your period of self-isolation.

Testing kits will be offered to parents in areas with the greatest number of cases to test their children. When requested to do so, parents are encouraged to get their child tested.

As well as Basildon, Harlow District Council has now being reported as having the second highest rate nationally with 351.6 per 100,000 and increasing case numbers.

For those concerned about self-isolation, or any other aspect of Covid-19, support is available.

The Essex Wellbeing Service offers advice on how to access shopping slots, the Essential Living Fund, CAB advice and access to food via foodbanks. Find out more here: <https://www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk/> or call 0300 303 9988.

Essex residents encouraged to sign-up to renewable energy and save with the Essex Energy Switch

On a lighter and more positive note residents are once again urged to make use of “The Essex Energy Switch” initiative

Cllr Simon Walsh, Essex County Council’s Cabinet Member for Environment, who is encouraging residents to register for the scheme which opened Tuesday 1st December 2020 and potentially save hundreds of pounds off energy bills.

This is about local communities coming together, supporting renewable energy and saving money on their gas and electricity bills – the more people that register, the bigger the potential saving per household.

Registering for the Energy Switch is quick, easy and a great help to avoid searching for the best deals as all the hard work done by someone else. The registration process is free and only takes five minutes. Once the registration window closes, energy companies will bid at an auction to see who can offer the lowest energy tariff.

Since the scheme launched in 2014, more than 17,500 people across the county have saved an average of £230 per household on their energy bills - more than £4.1 million across the county overall.

This year’s main attraction it is an even better offer than previous years, as suppliers will provide 100 per cent renewable electricity.

Once the winning bidder has been selected, anyone who has registered will be contacted by them directly with more details and information on how to switch.

Anyone that registered or switched their energy supplier through the Essex Energy Switch last year, will need to register again this year.

Once registered, there is no obligation to switch providers. Registering can be done online at www.essex.gov.uk/energyswitch or by calling Big Community Switch registration line on 0800 048 8439 to register and receive correspondence by post. Lines are open Mon-Fri, 8:00am - 5:30pm, please have a recent energy bill to hand.

Further information:

- The Essex Energy Switch is managed by **iChoosr**, a national organisation which specialises in maximising the power of group buying.
- iChoosr can negotiate bespoke and market leading tariffs not available direct or via price comparison services.

iChoosr now require all suppliers, from the October 2020 auction, to only bid with 100% renewable electricity tariffs for all categories of the auction.

Essex Climate Action Commission

Interim Report



On Thursday 19 November the Essex Climate Action Commission launched its [Interim Report](#). A press release was issued to announce its launch and the report was sent to a wide range of interested parties as well as some of those organisations which featured in the report as examples of good practice. We have asked companies and organisations to give us their response to the report and tell us how they intend to play their part in helping the county become net zero by 2050.

The Interim Report was received by Essex County Council's cabinet on Tuesday last week and the Leader thanked Commissioners for all their hard work.

Community Energy



Essex County Council is supporting Danbury residents in Chelmsford to tackle climate change with community-led action. Local residents attended an online event on 12th November to learn more about recent Solar PV installations in public buildings in the village. [A press release](#) was issued to mark the completion of the installations.

Residents discussed a wide range of ideas such as pumped energy storage (hydro), energy cafes and collective purchasing of solar PV. People were also keen to investigate opportunities for community ownership in commercial solar developments.

The event follows the successful installation of Solar PV systems at Danbury Park Primary School and Essex Outdoors Danbury in October. As well as energy savings, the installations will also deliver over 375 tonnes of carbon reduction over the lifetime of the systems installed.

The community event and solar PV installations were delivered as part of a project called "Empower" - Enabling More People's Ownership in Energy tRansition, funded by the European Commission (Interreg North Sea Region Programme).

A Community Energy Masterclass: [Making Local Action on Climate Change Happen](#) will take place virtually on 3 December to help residents understand action they can take locally to make a real difference.

Waste



Early in November, the waste special interest group meeting was held to discuss biowaste. Commissioners discussed why the management of biowastes such as green garden waste and food waste is so important and how it produces the harmful gas methane as well as leachate which can be very damaging to the environment.

Commissioners reflected on how much more expensive it is to treat biowaste if it isn't separated out from other waste and how it can be harnessed as a potential source of renewable energy.

There was a good discussion about the role of composting, particularly in the home environment to help residents become more aware of the amount of waste we are producing and how we can reduce 'waste miles' by composting at home.

We heard more about the recommendations that this working group are making on this and other matters relating to energy and waste at the Commission meeting earlier today.



Love Essex has launched a competition on its Facebook page to encourage residents to celebrate Christmas in a more sustainable manner and sign the Plastic Pledge, which has already been signed by over 6000 residents. The Love Essex team offers a range of tips as to how we can all celebrate in a more eco-conscious way, such as:

- Wrapping presents in saved tissue paper and boxes
- Using plastic-free tape to wrap presents
- Gifting experiences or trips



The prize on offer is a fantastic hamper of sustainable Christmas goodies including plastic free tape, string and make-your-own-crackers



A Love Essex competition to win a cloth nappy hamper closed last Monday after having attracted 246 entries. The Facebook post to promote the competition had a reach of 33,626 and 1,084 engagements.

Active travel

ECC has been awarded £7.3 million for active travel. This is the highest allocation of any county in England to further develop Safer, Greener and Healthier travel and transport locally. The funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) will go towards schemes to improve cycling and walking in Wickford, Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford and Colchester. The five schemes will now be developed in detail, taking into account the advice of councillors, businesses, cycling groups and other local groups.



A new e-scooter pilot trial in Essex has been announced this month.

Essex County Council, working with commercial partner, Spin, and city, district, and borough councils together with Essex Police, is leading on the electric scooter, popularly known as e-scooter, trials as part of its Safer, Greener, Healthier transport campaign.

With pilot approval from the Department of Transport now obtained, and final conversations with the six district, borough and city councils underway, the innovative Essex trials will hopefully see Spin, a company owned by Ford, provide and manage an e-scooter rental system in defined areas of Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Clacton, Chelmsford and Colchester.

Essex is Green



On the Essex is Green discussion group on Facebook, the most popular post was when the following question was posed: "Doctors say we should tax meat to help fight climate change. Would you support this?" The relationship between eating less meat and climate change is the most hotly contested subject.

Asking the question, "would you be happy to give up long haul flights?" was the second most engaging post, with the majority of respondents agreeing with the notion.

Across the month of November there was a total of 2000 post comments and reactions with nearly a 100% engagement rate and a 14% growth in membership this month.

The Commission in the media

It's been a bumper month for media coverage with a total of 19 articles which mention the Commission. Here's a few of the stories which have featured in the local media in November.

[Net-zero carbon homes initiative](#)

[Only net-zero homes from 2025](#)

[Three new park and rides](#)

[Community energy groups](#)



Commissioner activity



One of our Commissioners, Todd gave a fantastic presentation at the Local Government Communications Academy which took place last week as a three-day virtual event. With over 600 delegates present from local and central government, he talked about the challenges of communicating about the UK's first ever electric forecourt and having to bust myths about the perceived high cost of electric vehicles. He got the virtual room really engaged and excited about the launch which is coming very soon!

Toddington also spoke at an online community energy and sustainable transport event on 17th November. The event, attended by parish councillors, community groups and individuals from Great Notley and beyond, was intended to catalyse local community climate action. He talked about the urgency to act on climate change and the role of electric vehicles and sustainable energy in a net zero carbon world.

Events

County Council signs contract to secure £100m for north Essex infrastructure

Essex County Council has signed the final contract to secure almost £100m from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for new transport infrastructure in Colchester and Tendring.

The recent contract signing with Homes England – the agency responsible for awarding money from the fund – follows the initial announcement of the £99.9m funding last year.

In a welcome boost to the local economy, the funding will support the design and delivery of the new Colchester Rapid Transit System (RTS) and a new Link Road between the A120 and A133.

Cllr David Finch, Leader of ECC, said that signing the contract with Homes England marks an important milestone in the journey to delivering much-needed transport infrastructure in the north of the county.

This significant investment will go a long way in supporting local jobs, the economy and our wider efforts to be safer, greener and healthier, while also ensuring that the future growth of the county is supported by the appropriate infrastructure.

This investment is not just a victory for residents and businesses in north Essex, but clear recognition from the Government that Essex is ready and willing to deliver ambitious infrastructure projects.

Cllr David King, Colchester Borough Council Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, said that it is great news to have the agreement in place for this funding

Done well, it should not only help those still needing to use their cars but make it more attractive and easier to travel by public transport, reduce congestion and help improve air quality and quality of life. It will also help provide the connectivity businesses in the area need to rebuild and flourish once again following the impact of Covid -19.

It also means that the infrastructure needed to support sustainable housing growth in north Essex will be delivered at the offset.

The RTS will see an unprecedented investment in public transport in Colchester, linking key destinations across the town through the creation of a transit corridor. It will offer fast and regular services from the Park and Ride on the A12, through the town to the new Garden Community and ultimately a transport hub located off the new Link Road.

The link road also forms a key part of the new Garden Community and is being designed in collaboration with Colchester Borough and Tendring District Councils to ensure it complements and forms part of the development as it grows, as well as providing an integrated network of cycling and walking routes.

Cllr Carlo Guglielmi, Tendring District Council's Deputy Leader, said that throughout the development of Garden Community plans, the aim has always been very clear that they must be infrastructure led, and that is why this project is so important as part of that work, and that the agreement with Homes England is a key step on the path to delivering this innovative project.

The new A133-A120 Link Road will remove traffic from the existing road network by making it easier for people to access the A120 and A12, avoiding residential streets – and will also considerably decrease the through-traffic in the village of Elmstead Market.

The Link Road and RTS are both due to be operational by 2024 in line with the first phase of the Garden Community.

A central part of Colchester and Tendring's Local Plans, the Garden Community will bring forward substantial amounts of new business premises to support the town's economy at the same time as delivering 7,500 to 9000 new sustainable homes over a 30 years' time span, a new country park, new schools and health centres to ensure the development brings about real benefits to the local area.

A public engagement programme will form a key part of the work on the garden community, and in turn inform the planning and development work.

In addition to this investment ECC is in currently in ongoing discussions with Homes England and other stakeholders to secure a £218m grant funding award for the North East Chelmsford Bypass and new Beaulieu Park Railway Station.

For more information on the scheme and to register for updates visit www.essex.gov.uk/link-road-and-rapid-transit.

