

## **Appendix A – ECC's Response to ECAC Interim Report**

The following activities and commitments demonstrate an active and immediate response to the interim recommendations of the Essex Climate Action Commission.

The full range of recommendations made in the interim report can be found in Appendix B. Work is continuing to be undertaken to understand how they can best be achieved e.g. explore funding requirements, partnerships required etc. It should be noted that a significant number of the Commission's recommendations listed are also for other public sector bodies, businesses, charities, community groups and residents to deliver. However, ECC is committed to working with stakeholders and aims to support businesses and residents in taking climate action.

### **A green recovery**

Whilst supporting our businesses through the current pandemic is a major priority for Essex, we are also planning for the economic recovery when the Covid restrictions ease. It is vital that this is a green recovery at its heart, so that it helps us better tackle the climate challenge and also generates local jobs. Low carbon technologies, green innovation and climate mitigation mechanisms will all see significant growth over the coming years. We want Essex to be a leader in those areas so we can better attract new businesses, whilst also helping existing businesses grow and diversity, creating jobs for our residents.

### **New homes and communities**

- We are commissioning a new chapter on best practice and climate change policies to be incorporated into the Essex Design Guide.
- We have secured a South East New Energy (SENE) £3.1m grant for £6.4m project supporting Modern Methods of Construction/Low carbon housing to build a stronger local energy economy and contribute towards more environmentally friendly building practices. University of East London will lead the project with ECC as one of three partners.
- We have built four new school buildings which are EPC A+ rated and are taking forward a further 9 school building projects which will be low-carbon or net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Existing buildings and urban regeneration**

- We have produced a 'road to net zero' plan which sets out a route to retrofitting our core estate to deliver a net zero greenhouse gas emission estate by 2030 and are working to establish additional investment required to deliver this. We have received £564,000 in grant and loan funding from central government for our estate and have applied for a further £4.7m. ECC has a policy to transform its estate to have Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
- We are working with Essex schools and utility companies to roll out smart meters in nearly 200 schools as soon as possible with a large number having

already been completed.

- As part of our future schools' capital maintenance programme, we will ensure that energy efficiency is a key consideration in the solutions that we deliver. We have committed to working closely with schools to secure funding for major retrofit projects.
- Working with city, district and borough partners we have secured over £800,000 to install energy saving measures in 80 low income homes across the county by the end of March 2021 under the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme (GHGLADS).
- ECC launched a year-long campaign in January 2021 to promote both GHGLADS and the Green Homes Grant to households (including targeted advertising amongst disadvantaged groups) and eligible installers in Essex.
- We also have £859,000 grant funding to provide energy and financial wellbeing advice with Citizens Advice Essex.
- Following on from the approval of £26m in Government Getting Building Funding on Essex projects in late 2020, ECC is continuing to support the delivery of the 13 projects to support growth and jobs in our area. These projects will be completed by March 2022 and deliver a range of improvements including transport and digital infrastructure, new workspace and skills facilities.
- ECC supported bids by Harlow District and Colchester Borough Councils for £25m in Towns Fund monies from Government. The bids were submitted in late October 2020 and we await the Government's response in the next two months. They include a number of projects that would be delivered by Essex County Council including improvements to public transport and public realm, along with enhanced digital skills provision.
- Essex County Council has committed £5m in a £50m Investment Fund in Harlow Town Centre. Working alongside Homes England, Harlow District Council and Places for People the investment will deliver housing, infrastructure and public realm improvements to key town centre sites over the next five years, supporting Harlow's wider growth and transformation.

### **Resistance to coastal and surface water flooding and extreme weather**

- We have invested £1.7m as part of our ongoing programme of flood defence improvements. We will invest a further £2.6m in flood defences next year as part of our ongoing commitment to flood defences in Essex. For both financial years we look to generate 50% of the total budget from external funding and grants.
- We have secured £471,500 from the Environment Agency's Flood Defence grant in Aid and Local Levy to protect approx. 250 residential properties at risk of flooding in Essex over a period of 6 years under our 'Property Flood

Resilience' Grant Scheme By the end of March 2021, we will have installed 450 Property Level Resilience schemes since the Essex grant initiative began in 2017.

- In the last year we have provided advice on 500 planning applications improving Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) on over 62,000 properties.

## **Transport and highways**

- We secured £7.6M funding from Department for Transport for Active Travel in Essex including dedicated cycleways, walkable neighborhoods and school streets. This built upon the work we did in 10 locations to extend footpaths, facilitate social distancing and making it easier and safer to walk and cycle
- We supported the successful £5.3m bid to Innovate UK to bring forward the UK's first electric vehicle charging station which opened in Braintree in December 2020. This is entirely powered by renewable energy.
- We are creating an electric vehicle strategy for Essex.
- We have conducted a Fleet Electrification Review to consider the path forward for ensuring vehicles used in delivering our services are all hybrid or electric and have committed to introducing EV into our own fleet this year.
- As the Authority's figurehead, we are working towards replacing the Chairman's vehicle with a more eco-friendly solution before the end of this year.
- Hot asphalt, or warm tarmac, which is 50 degrees cooler than conventional materials, is being piloted by our Essex Highways teams. It uses less energy and typically reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 20-40%. We have trialled using this for resurfacing roads on the A13, east of Hadleigh high street, saving 20% on energy costs and reducing carbon emissions.
- Since launching on 6 July 2020, Stop.Swap.GO!, our behaviour change campaign encouraging residents to walk and cycle, has reached over 1 million people. Our 60 day challenge demonstrated potential for 307 million fewer car miles to be driven every year, when results were extrapolated across the county's population.
- We introduced our first e-scooter trial in Basildon in December, the first of six locations. So far riders have amassed more than 1,300 trips so far - despite strict lockdown restrictions.

## **Energy and Waste**

- We have secured an extra £1.3 funding for a further phase of Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) over the next three years for Essex to help SMEs to reduce their carbon emissions through energy efficiency measures, renewables or investment in EVs.
- Last year, the Essex Energy Switch campaign (Winter 2019) supported 1,644 residents in switching to a 100% renewable energy tariff while saving £425,000 on their energy bills (£258 per household). The current campaign is on track to achieve similar results with 3,413 households registered (as of 27/01/2021). Each household that switched will reduce their carbon footprint

by an average of 1.16 tonnes carbon dioxide ("CO<sup>2</sup>") per year. In total for the whole scheme this equates to 1,906 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup>, which is equivalent to removing 1,059 cars from the road.

- Solar Together delivered solar panels on 305 households: a £1.3M investment saving 7,150 tonnes of carbon over the lifetime of the installations. Residents saved an average of 20% on market rates. A new campaign will be launched on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021.
- We secured £250k in funding from "Empower 2.0" - Enabling More People's OWnership in Energy tRansition, funded by the European Commission (Interreg North Sea Region Programme).
- We have installed solar panels on Essex Outdoors Danbury and Danbury Park Community Primary School in October.
- Electricity produced by the solar panels across the two sites is equivalent to the amount of electricity needed to supply 22 average homes. The installations will also avoid 15 tonnes of carbon reductions annually or 375 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> equivalent over the lifetime of the systems installed.
- We are spending a further £1.2m on solar panels for 14 schools by the end of March 2021.
- The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) which covers Kent, East Sussex, Thurrock, Southend and Essex has established an emissions reduction target of 3,575 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> equivalent per year.
- We are undertaking a feasibility study to source our own energy use from renewable energy here in the county.
- ECC has submitted a response to MHCLG's consultation on improving the energy efficiency standards of private rented sector homes. In the consultation response we highlighted ECC's climate action aspirations and encouraged Government to go further and more quickly in this area. We will continue to raise our ambitions with Government through future consultations.
- ECC facilitated and brought together local authorities and Housing Associations within Essex to raise awareness of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Demonstrator project which has led to further development of projects and collaborations opportunities. Colchester Borough Council submitted a bid alongside Peabody Housing and is awaiting a decision on the outcome. Further funding through SHDF is expected in 2021/22 of which ECC is keen to drive applications across the county.
- As part of our Love Essex work, we will extend the Cloth Nappy refund scheme to reach more families and to broaden the scope to include toddler age groups.
- We will trial a "Library of Things" to reduce waste by loaning equipment to residents as part of the Blueprint for a Circular Economy project in partnership with the Essex Library Service.
- Also, as part of this project we aim to develop and deliver an intervention to promote reusable and refillable bathroom products. We will develop and deliver an initiative to promote reusable menstrual/hygiene products.
- We have secured £1.4million to help Essex and other local authorities in England and France move towards a circular economy. Across the next two and a half years, the project will establish a circular economy model for local authorities, upskill 2,000 socially and economically disadvantaged people, and engage 78,000 individuals in behaviour change programmes to reduce their

waste and increase their recycling rates. The project team is currently working to engage residents and local authorities and recruit social enterprises. By the end of March 2021, the team will have:

- Completed resident engagement workshops and 50 local authority interviews to inform the development of policies and strategies
- Recruited 18 social enterprises and held an initial workshop to start developing a training scheme for disadvantaged residents

## **Rural communities and land**

- The Essex Forest Initiative will have planted 36,805 trees with farmers, charities, city, districts and borough councils, beating the target of 25,000 trees by 48%
- We are planting nationally rare Black Poplar and Purple Willow in Chelmsford and creating habitat in our wet woodlands for local otters
- This year we completed a water garden and wetland in Basildon Hospital to take water off the roofs of the hospital and prevent flooding downstream. In addition, these new green spaces have been vital to allow staff, patients and relatives to sit outside in Covid-safe conditions and benefit from the peaceful green spaces.
- Essex has been selected by Natural England as one of ten trial projects across England to test the National Green Infrastructure Standards Framework as a result of the action from the 25-Year Environment Plan.
- The Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy was awarded a Building with Nature Accreditation of Excellent – the highest achievable under this accreditation scheme and one of only eight local authorities to have been awarded this accreditation so far.
- We have negotiated a Memorandum of Agreement with the Woodland Trust so we can combine ECC and Woodland Trust funding to offer Local authorities, Parishes, and landowners 90% funding towards the costs of new woodland planting in Essex

## **Engaging our communities**

- ECC is working with partners across Essex to support residents, business and public sector to take action on climate change.
- As part of the Essex Partners Board's mission on 'Sharing Prosperity', partners are exploring their role as anchor institutions including their contribution towards climate action and supporting the environment. Over the forthcoming months, these anchors will be making pledges around this agenda and through a collaborative approach, we will be implementing these into actions.
- We are setting up a Net Zero Innovation Network (NZIN) to work together to create the partnerships and optimise the appetite for innovation in Essex focusing on achieving net zero outcomes for the County. The NZIN will host three core facilitated workshop sessions, the first of which will take place in late February/early March. The work will be hosted throughout the year via three core sessions maintaining progress, sharing information and innovation

and be supported in achieving its goals by task and finish groups working on the big challenges for Essex in achieving net zero. It will work on a maximum of three agreed projects at any one time to take ideas forward to delivery.

- We are in the process of bidding for £600,000 non-match funded transformation funds through the European *ATSI: the Adaptation and Transformation through Systemic Innovation*: a project led by University College Dublin and supported by Anglia Ruskin University.
- ECC recognised that a different model of communication and civic infrastructure was needed to reach people where they are using social media. ECC has invested in a Community Campaign Model, 'Essex is Green,' as part of its approach to public engagement. Essex Is Green is designed to raise awareness of the work of the Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC). We have achieved this by interviewing ECAC members, including Bishop Roger Morris and Archie Ruggles-Brise and we now have an extensive programme of interviews scheduled for 2021.

Essex is Green channels also feature regular video content from ECAC member Rob Pilley who is set to produce and direct the next Attenborough series and has his own social media channel called Rob's Wild Adventures. Since we launched in July 2020, the Essex Is Green Facebook page has reached more than 5m news feeds. The project is key to helping us to understand the community's sentiments around the themes of the ECAC and to galvanising social action to drive behaviour change around the green agenda with communities across Essex.

## **Community energy**

- Six community groups in Essex are receiving tailored support delivered by Community Energy South as part of the EU grant funded programme LECSEA, to get established and develop a business plan. The groups also get help to access funding such as ECC Community Fund, LOCASE and the Rural Community Energy Fund to build community energy projects such as community owned solar or wind farms, fuel poverty support, energy efficiency advice services, electric vehicle car clubs, etc.). Four additional groups are in discussions to enter this support programme.
- We have announced a new £1m ECC fund to support residents and communities to take action directly on the climate challenge.