

Country Parks Car Parking – Consultation now open

Essex County Council is consulting on proposed increases to car parking charges – the consultation is open until 18th March. ECC wants to ensure the future of the valuable outdoor spaces, whilst continuing to maintain and develop the spaces for the 850,000 visitors each year and for future generations.

Over £1 million pounds has been invested in the country parks over the last couple of years with improvements to footpaths and accessibility, signage, facilities and on play equipment and there's more planned. Views are sought on the proposed change to charges. Take a look at www.visitparks.co.uk to find out more.

Countryside Productivity – Small Grants Scheme

A new £60m grants scheme where farmers can bid for cash to buy new farm equipment has been announced by Farming Minister George Eustice. For more information and application details please click the link to the [Handbook](#)

Your Community, Libraries and You

Essex County Council is holding events during March to find out what role libraries can play in local communities. Options include hubs for local people, services and activities and ECC is looking for creative ideas to work in partnership with local organisations. For a list of the free events, click [here](#). All events run from 7pm to 9pm.

Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme Update

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is continuing the Neighbourhood Planning grant and support programme beyond March 2018 and a formal update on the new programme is expected shortly. With the impending announcement expected, Government is advising that the new programme is on track to open from 1 April 2018 and that applications for grant and technical support will be available from this date.

National Planning Policy Framework Update

MHCLG is in the process of revising the NPPF in order to implement the planning reform package leading on from the housing White Paper, the Planning for the right homes in the right places consultation and the announcements made in the Autumn Budget. The NPPF consultation period has now ended and a draft revised NPPF is expected before Easter, with a final revised Framework planned for the summer.

Essex Design Guide updated to reflect contemporary lifestyles

The Essex Design Guide (EDG) has been digitally revamped to provide contemporary socio economic, environmental, and best practice guidance to planners and those interested in the provision of new housing developments. For more information and to access the new EDG, please click [here](#).