



RESIDENT ADVICE PACK

Taking Action on Climate Change

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Introduction

Taking action to protect our local environment remains a fundamental priority for Essex County Council.

This Climate Action Advice Pack is regularly updated to ensure that you have the most recent advice around environmental action. We are delighted to publish our third edition of the advice pack. The publication of the updated advice pack coincides with the launch of the [new Sustainable Essex website](#). This is a fantastic place to learn more about all the great work taking place across the county, find out about inspiring sustainability projects in Essex and access a wealth of tools to help you get involved with helping the local environment.

In the pack, you can discover tips and advice on how you can support our environment. We hope that this will help to inspire you to make small changes which can add up to make a significant difference over time. You can also learn more about the incredible work which is taking place in your local communities.

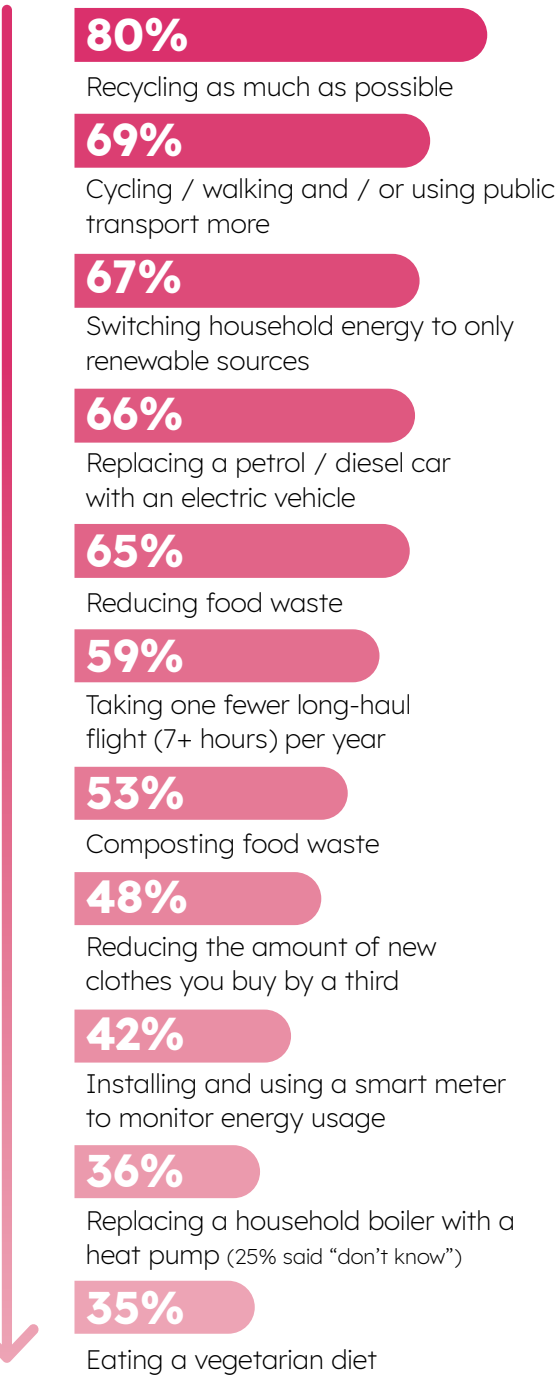
We would like to thank you for downloading a copy of the new Climate Action Advice Pack and joining our dedicated community who are committed to helping Essex to become a more sustainable county.

In 2021, Essex County Council conducted a survey by [Thinks Insight & Strategy](#) to understand how residents are currently taking action to support the local environment and their beliefs towards climate-related behaviours.

In the following chart, the left column illustrates how residents rated certain actions and their impact towards global warming. The column on the right shows the top everyday things we can do to reduce our impact. Were you surprised by these results?

Climate action top tips

Essex residents were asked what impact they thought certain actions had on tackling climate change – this is what we thought.



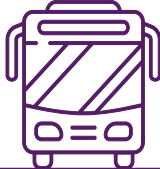
(Percentage of residents who believe each activity has a significant impact on tackling climate change (score of 4 or 5))

So, what are **REALLY** the top things we can do to help tackle climate change?¹

-  **Replacing a petrol / diesel car with an electric vehicle**
-  **Taking one fewer long-haul flight (7+ hours) per year**
-  **Switching household energy to only renewable sources**
-  **Cycling / walking and / or using public transport more**
-  **Replacing a household boiler with a heat pump**
-  **Eating a vegetarian diet**
-  **Reducing food waste**
-  **Installing and using a smart meter to monitor energy usage**
-  **Reducing the amount of new clothes you buy by a third**
-  **Recycling as much as possible**
-  **Composting food waste**

What Can I Do?

The table below provides some suggested actions which you can take, and where you can find out more information on this in the Climate Action Resident Advice Pack. Please note, **these are not all the actions**, and we will be providing further examples in each chapter of the advice pack.

Issue	Opportunity	Support	Page
 Travel and Transport	Plan sustainable journeys in Essex	Search and plan sustainable journeys across Essex with the free Travel Essex app .	11
		Find out how you can incorporate walking and cycling for shorter journeys and longer trips, as well as some of their potential benefits to wellbeing.	9
		DigiGo is an on-demand and pre-bookable transport service. Book via the TravelEssex app or the booking phone line 0345 603 7633.	11
 Food	Recycle your food	Visit Love Essex for information on how to reduce and recycle your food waste.	23
	Cut down on food waste and make the most out of your leftovers		23
	Follow the UK Eatwell Guide	British Nutrition Foundation Eatwell Guide	24
 Waste	Reduce general waste at home	Visit Love Essex for information on how to reduce household waste .	28

Issue	Opportunity	Support	Page
Energy	Install solar panels at a reduced cost	Register for Switch Together-Solar , our collective purchasing scheme for Solar panels and battery storage.	16
	Receive a grant to install a heat pump	Register for Switch Together-Heat Pump , our collective purchasing scheme for Heat Pumps. Also explore the Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant to cover up to ££7,500 towards the cost of a heat pump.	17
	Energy efficiency advice	You can access further advice on the Energy Savings Trust website. Heat Essex has partnered with Essex County Council and Warm Homes to provide information on energy efficiency installation grants and support, with a focus on those who are from low-income households. You can also receive one-to-one energy efficiency assessments to find out how you can reduce your energy bills.	17



Issue	Opportunity	Support	Page
Outdoors	Start composting at home for less	Get Composting offer subsidised compost bins.	33
	Tree planting opportunities	If you have land to plant trees or would like to volunteer, visit the Essex Local Nature Recovery Facebook Page to learn more, or contact us directly at environment@essex.gov.uk .	34
	Protect your property against flooding	You can express your interest in the property flood resilience grant (currently paused), which offers individual grants to reduce the impacts of flooding for eligible properties, subject to surveys. To find actions that you can take at home, see the Weather Wise Gardens guide.	35
	Discounted water butt for Essex residents	Essex County Council offers subsidised water butts for residents through getcomposting .	33



Useful resources	Track and reduce your carbon footprint	The free Carbon Cutting Essex app helps us to track and reduce our carbon footprint. Through a range of interactive activities, such as quizzes, blogs and videos, the app allows residents to deep dive into various environmental themes and learn more about how we can all move to more sustainable lifestyles. Please note that users must be over the age of 13 years to download the app. If you are the parent or legal guardian of a child who is at primary, secondary school or early years, by regularly engaging with the app, you can earn points which can be used to help your local school win a Schools' Sustainability Kit. These contain various educational items such as gardening kits and activity books to inspire young people to get involved with helping the local environment.	44
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These people have benefitted from the Green Homes Grant.

port

A purple graphic featuring the word "port" in white. Below the text are several white line-art icons: an airplane, a bicycle, a scooter, a location pin, a charging station, footprints, and a truck sign.

We recognise that for most of us in Essex, a car is vital for our daily lives. However, perhaps there are some journeys where we could consider alternatives, such as electric and hybrid. Petrol and diesel cars are the most intensive sources of personal emissions.

An illustration showing a car and a bus. The car is on the left, and the bus is on the right. A large purple cloud with the text 'CO2' is positioned above the car. A smaller purple cloud with the text 'CO2' is positioned above the bus. Both vehicles are represented by simple line drawings.

According to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, there are over **800,000 cars in Essex**². If every household in Essex replaced a one-mile car trip each week with walking or cycling, we could save multiple thousands of tonnes of carbon³. Think how much you could save by walking, scooting or cycling short trips to school, rather than driving.



However, where walking is not possible, making low-carbon travel choices is one of the most effective ways we can reduce our environmental impact. **The Transport Hierarchy** helps people to understand which travel modes have the lowest and highest impacts on the planet, our health and our communities. By choosing options higher up the hierarchy more often, residents can cut emissions, improve wellbeing, and create safer, healthier communities.



The transition to hybrid working and working from home for many people has long been praised as an effective solution to reduce our carbon footprint. Where possible, consider working from home to help lower your carbon footprint.



Walking & Cycling

For more information about swapping shorter journeys for walking, cycling or wheeling - either on foot, a traditional bike or on an e-bike or e-scooter- visit the [Let's Talk Essex Sustainable Travel engagement hub](#) for inspiration. Your workplace might also offer a tax-free bike scheme such as [Bike 2 Work](#) or [CycleScheme](#). Essex County Council also offers [cycling training](#) for adults and children.

The **Essex Pedal Power Programme** offers free bikes, cycling training and community cycling opportunities for eligible residents. The initiative helps residents to improve their health and wellbeing, as well as their access to employment, education, health and local services. The service operates and supports residents living in the following areas:

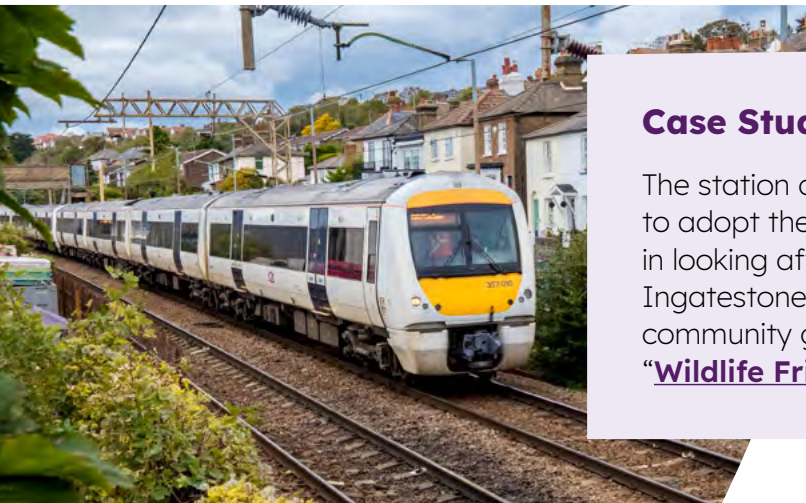
- Clacton and Jaywick Sands
- Harwich and Dovercourt
- Greenstead, Colchester
- Harlow
- Basildon
- Canvey Island



Since its launch in 2021, Essex Pedal Power has distributed over 4,000 bikes to eligible residents across the county. The programme offers free bikes, volunteer opportunities, and training sessions to people living in some of the county's most disadvantaged communities, helping to improve health and wellbeing while encouraging more sustainable travel through cycling.

The train

Travelling by train across Essex is one of the easiest ways to make your journeys more sustainable, with Greater Anglia and c2c offering comfortable, reliable services that help cut carbon with every trip. By combining rail travel with walking, cycling or taking the bus, it's possible to enjoy seamless journeys that fit naturally into everyday life, especially with the new **Sunshine Coast rover ticket** offering unlimited rail travel between Colchester and Clacton / Walton. See Greater Anglia's new **Integrated Transport campaign** for more information, and use the **Greater Anglia's Carbon Calculator** to see the eco-friendly benefits of swapping the car for the train on your next journey.



Case Study: Wildlife Friendly Station

The station adopters scheme allows individuals or groups to adopt their local railway station and get involved in looking after the local environment. The "Friends of Ingatestone Station" has received recognition for its community garden station work and was awarded with "**Wildlife Friendly Station**" status.

Bus

Taking the bus is the best way to lower your carbon footprint. If everyone switched just one car journey a month to the bus, there would be **a billion fewer car journeys** and a saving of 2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. In the UK, 55% of greenhouse gas emissions are from cars and just 3% from buses. Basildon has become home to Essex's first fully electric bus depot and bus fleet following the completion of a major project delivered by First Bus in partnership with Essex County Council – and we're excited to build on this progress, working towards electric bus services that reach every corner of Essex. Essex also has 3 **Park and Ride** sites including Chelmer Valley Park and Ride, Colchester Park and Ride and Sandon Park and Ride. By using the service, you only have to drive part of the way and there is a bus for the final bit of the journey. This helps you to avoid the traffic with stress-free travel and at the same time, you are helping to protect the environment for everyone.



DigiGo

DigiGo is an on-demand and pre-bookable electric transport service, that works to best suit your travel needs, rather than having set routes and timetables.

The service offers an **environmentally-friendly** mode of transport for residents in **suburban and rural areas of Essex** who may have little or no access to existing public transport links. DigiGo operates 7 days a week, from 6am to 10pm on weekdays and 7am to 10pm on weekends with a single fare currently capped at £3.

Book journeys, track the vehicle and pay for fares within the TravelEssex app. You can also contact DigiGo on digigo@essex.gov.uk or by calling 0345 603 7633.



Travel Essex app

Search and plan sustainable journeys across Essex by train, bus, bike and walking with the **Travel Essex app**. You can plan journeys up to 7 days in advance. The app is free to download from the **App Store** and **Google Play**.

Car share

Or perhaps share a journey if destinations are the same, similar or en-route, halving your emissions and potentially leading to new friendships and experiences. Check out the **Essex Carshare scheme**, where you can find car share groups across the county as part of the 'Liftshare' network.

Car Club

Take advantage of car clubs and enjoy easy, affordable access to a car exactly when you need one – without the cost, stress, or environmental impact of owning your own. Just book online, unlock it with your phone, and you'll be ready to go, with fuel, insurance, and maintenance all taken care of! By sharing cars rather than owning them individually, we can cut carbon, reduce congestion, and free up space in our communities, making this a greener choice for everyone.

Find out what's available near you:

- **Enterprise - Essex** - centres based in Basildon, Braintree and Chelmsford but available to use across Essex
- **Colchester Car Club** - Enterprise Car Club is the official car club provider in Colchester, supported by Colchester City Council
- **Co-Wheels** - covering Brentwood



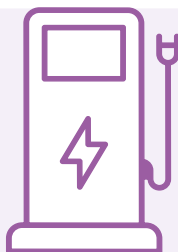
Electric Vehicles

If public transport is difficult where you live, have you considered investing in or leasing an electric vehicle (EV)?

Traditional petrol and diesel cars are powered by internal combustion engines (ICE) which emit large amounts of carbon. Switching to an EV is one of the most significant reductions to our carbon footprint that an individual can make. There are other benefits as well as such as reducing localised noise and air pollution for yourself, others, and the surrounding environment.

Of car engine types, EVs emit the least amount of carbon. In Essex, we are proud to be home to the UK's first electric charging forecourt at GRIDSERVE in Braintree. The site offers 24/7 charging and other facilities including a lounge area with free WIFI, a dog walking and picnic area, as well as a Costa Coffee and Little Fresh. It also offers fuel service to help disabled drivers to charge their cars. Electric vehicles are powered solely by electricity with large batteries that store energy and electric motors that control the wheels. EVs produce no tailpipe emissions and are the most energy efficient choice.

You could also consider a hybrid electric vehicle (HEV) which combines an ICE with an electric motor and a small battery. These vehicles have dual power sources and switch between the petrol engine and electric motor in response to driving conditions.



Driving an electric vehicle is becoming easier and more affordable, even if you can't charge on a driveway at home. On-street chargers from companies like [Qwello](#), who are in partnership with Essex County Council, are popping up all over the county, with many more to come!

You can find out where some upcoming chargers are going to be on the [Let's Talk Essex Sustainable Travel website](#) and suggest new charge point locations. You could also consider downloading the "[Zapmap](#)" app on your phone which shows the location of all the charging points across the UK.

And if an EV is still out of the question, then driving carefully can go far – reducing our speeds, not accelerating, braking between speed bumps and concentrating on a more efficient, smoother driving style. It will be safer, cheaper, less stressful, and less polluting!



Air Quality

Choosing **active travel** and **public transport**, or switching to an electric or low emission vehicle, also helps **improve local air quality**. Poor air quality is damaging to our health and particularly affects children, older people and other vulnerable people such as pregnant women and those with asthma. You can find out more about sources of air pollution, the health impacts and how to help reduce exposure to air pollution on the [Essex Air website](#).



Air travel

Aeroplanes have allowed us to be able to holiday globally, but also have a huge, hidden environmental cost.

Essex is home to two international airports in the UK, London Stansted Airport (STN) and London Southend Airport (SEN). A return business class flight from London to Hong Kong, for example, is equivalent to **10 tonnes of carbon emissions per person⁴**. To put this into perspective, the average carbon footprint for a person living in England is **13 tonnes of emissions per year⁵** – and this is a footprint considered far too high by scientists and governments worldwide committed to net-zero.

When booking holidays, consider choosing short-haul destinations instead of long-haul. The closer the destination, the smaller your travel carbon footprint. Get inspired by destinations closer to home and focus on more local exploration by rail, road or ferry. Instead of jetting abroad, you could explore the beauty of the United Kingdom and opt for staycations and discover hidden gems within your own country.



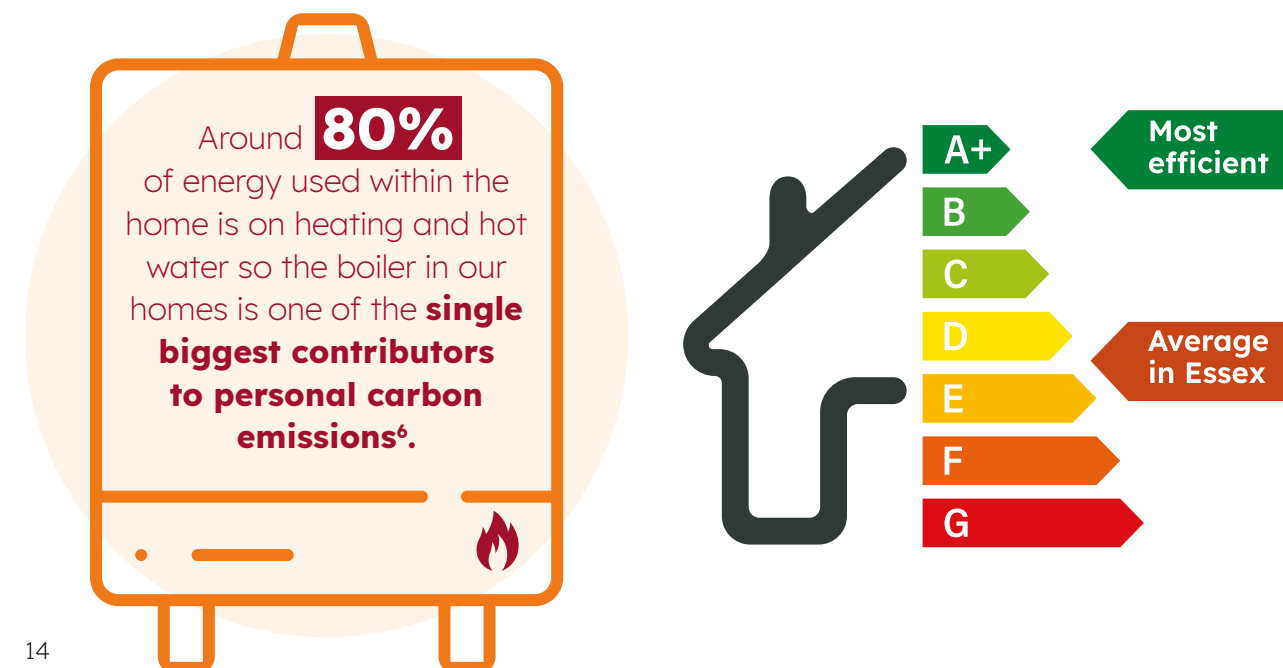
2. Energy

One of the best things about improving our home's energy efficiency is that it cuts our bills as well as carbon.

A well-insulated, ventilated and energy-efficient home can have much lower energy bills in comparison with the average home.

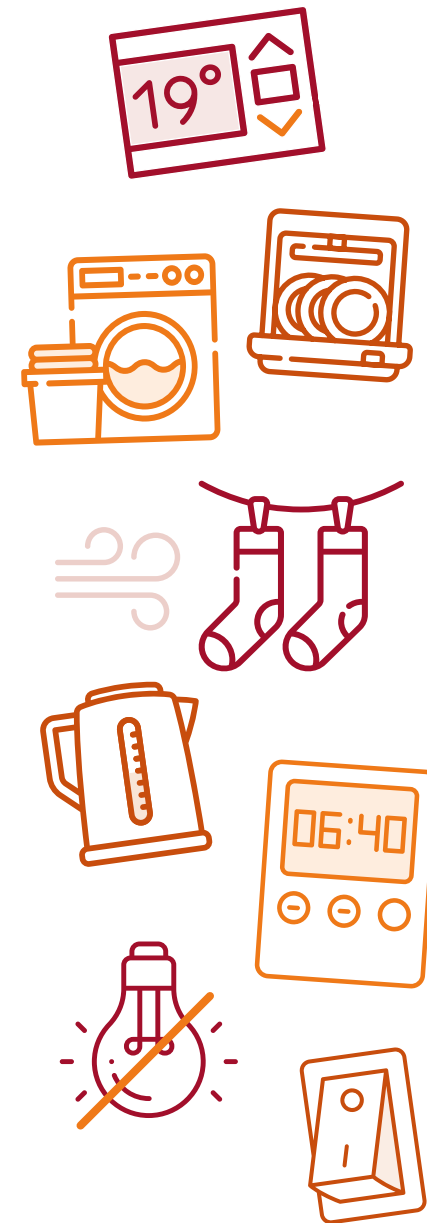
Draughty, poorly insulated homes can also be very harmful to our health too. Upgrading our homes by **improving the insulation** can help keep us warm and comfortable, improve our health and save significant amounts of money.

Our **Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)** show how energy efficient our home is, and if it's in need of improvements (if the rating is below C). **The most efficient home is A+** and is less expensive to heat. Around 67% of Essex homes have a poor EPC rating of D or below, meaning most residents are paying more for their heating than is necessary and creating more greenhouse gas emissions. If you're buying or renting a new home, make sure you look into the **EPC**, and make sure you know the cost of any changes that will be needed in the future. For example, we will all change our heating over time to move to low carbon sources such as heat pumps.



Home energy saving tips

Saving energy and saving money on our energy bills goes hand in hand.



- **Turning down the thermostat**, even by just one degree, will save energy. Programme heating to make sure you only have it on when someone is home, for example.
- **Run washing machines and dishwashers on lower temperature** settings or eco-modes, so they can do the job without using too much energy. Also, only running these when you have **a full load** will decrease the number of loads, saving you energy and money week on week!
- On sunnier and warmer days, make the most of the weather by **drying clothes outside**, or an air dryer for the winter months. If you need to use the tumble dryer, make sure it is **definitely full** before starting.
- Simple things around the house also use energy - such as boiling a kettle. So, a good tip is to **only fill your kettle with as much as you need**.
- **Put your appliances on timers** so they switch off automatically at certain times when you know no one is using them.
- **Switching devices off at the wall or unplugging them entirely** helps to save more energy compared to leaving them on standby. **Turning off the lights** when not in use is an oldie but a goodie.

Making these small daily changes at home can help you save money on your energy bills and save energy at the same time!

Energy Saving Trust has lots more quick tips to save energy at home and a wealth of information on home energy efficiency, heating and renewables.

You can also get specific information on energy efficiency measures for your home on '**Find ways to save energy in your home - GOV.UK**.'



Renewable Energy

Renewable energy comes from non-polluting natural processes such as solar, wind or hydro power. Lots of energy suppliers provide renewable based supplies.

The Government has also launched its Clean Energy website [Clean energy - Clean Energy Homepage](#) which has advice on what actions you could take including getting solar panels, installing a heat pump and saving energy in your home.



Case Study: Switch Together

Since the Switch Together Solar scheme was launched in 2018, it has helped **3,010 households** with installing **solar panels, 102 with heat pumps** (with a further 42 due by the end of current scheme) and 20,693 residents to switch energy supplier.



Financial help and incentives

Lots of advice is available on getting the best deal from your energy suppliers from sites like [Money Supermarket](#) or [Compare The Market](#).

[GoCompare](#) has developed an interactive energy cost calculator tool to find out how much something costs to run. You can use the calculator below to pick the appliances which you would like to compare and select how long they'll be in use for.

You can switch to renewables using the [Essex Energy Switch](#) which helps you move your energy provider. The scheme brings households together, suppliers compete for your business, and you get a fair, predictable rate - all from 100% renewable electricity.

Or if it's possible, install renewable energy such as a solar panel into your own home to not only save money in the long-term, but reduce your carbon footprint - and dependency on the grid!

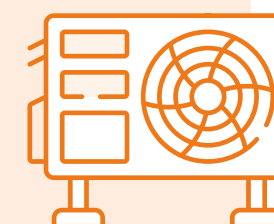
[Switch Together Solar](#) is a group buying scheme that allows people to install solar panels at a significantly reduced cost.

There are also grants to help you improve your home:

- the Government has announced the [Boiler Upgrade Scheme](#) which offers grants of up to £7,500 for homeowners to replace their boiler with air and ground source heat pumps as well as grants of up to £5,000 towards a biomass boiler. This is available to anyone buying a heat pump
- the Warm Homes: Local Grant is a government-funded scheme delivered by Local Authorities. Households with incomes under £36,000 and a low energy efficiency rating (EPC D or below) can access grants for insulation, solar panels and low carbon heating systems (Air Source Heat Pumps and High Heat Retention Storage Heaters). ECC in partnership with Happy Energy Solutions Ltd. and their [Heat Essex](#) service are delivering an Essex-wide scheme with all Essex local and unitary authorities; **except Basildon Borough Council** who are delivering the grant scheme on their own for Basildon residents.



£7,500
grants available
towards air and
ground source
heat pumps



Community-led Energy

Another fantastic way to support a low carbon energy transition is by participating in 'community energy' projects. These initiatives put people at the heart of the energy system. Examples of projects include groups working to install solar energy in a village hall or primary school, free energy saving advice to residents, or even electric car sharing clubs. These projects are either completely owned and led by communities or in partnership with commercial developers where the community has a part ownership stake.

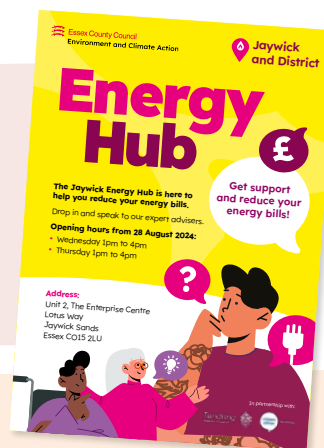
Rally the neighbours and get the community involved in a community-led energy plan. Organise a free workshop series to engage with your neighbours to help determine what the future of renewable and more affordable clean energy can look like in your community. Essex County Council offers [POWER workshops](#) to support local communities with transitioning to renewable energy.

Essex County Council provides free support for groups to start and develop projects. This could include a series of workshops in your village hall to create a vision for a community-owned and managed energy project to benefit everyone in your area. More information on how you could get involved can be found by emailing lowcarbon@essex.gov.uk.

The [Great British Energy Community Fund – Greater South East Net Zero Hub](#) allows community energy groups to access up to £40,000 for a feasibility study, and up to £100,000 for anything post-feasibility study to help get projects ready for an installation.

Case Study: Jaywick Community Energy Hub

Since it was established in 2024, the [Jaywick Community Energy Hub](#) has allowed residents to access energy support and save money on their bills.



Case Study: Heat Essex

[HEAT Essex](#) is a countywide programme delivered in partnership with Essex County Council to help eligible residents make their homes warmer and more energy efficient. Funded by the Government's Warm Homes: Local Grant, it supports vulnerable households to reduce energy bills and improve comfort. Since launching in December 2025, 69 homes have already benefited. Eligibility criteria apply and due to high interest availability is limited. *Basildon operates its own local scheme.

Case Study: Brentwood Climate Action Group

The Brentwood Climate Action Group hosts climate "cafés" on the [last Saturday of each month](#). To encourage local sustainability changes in day to day living, the group hosts activities led by experts in their field. This year, the group has hosted talks about recycling, natural probiotics, climate and nature recovery, choosing green energy.

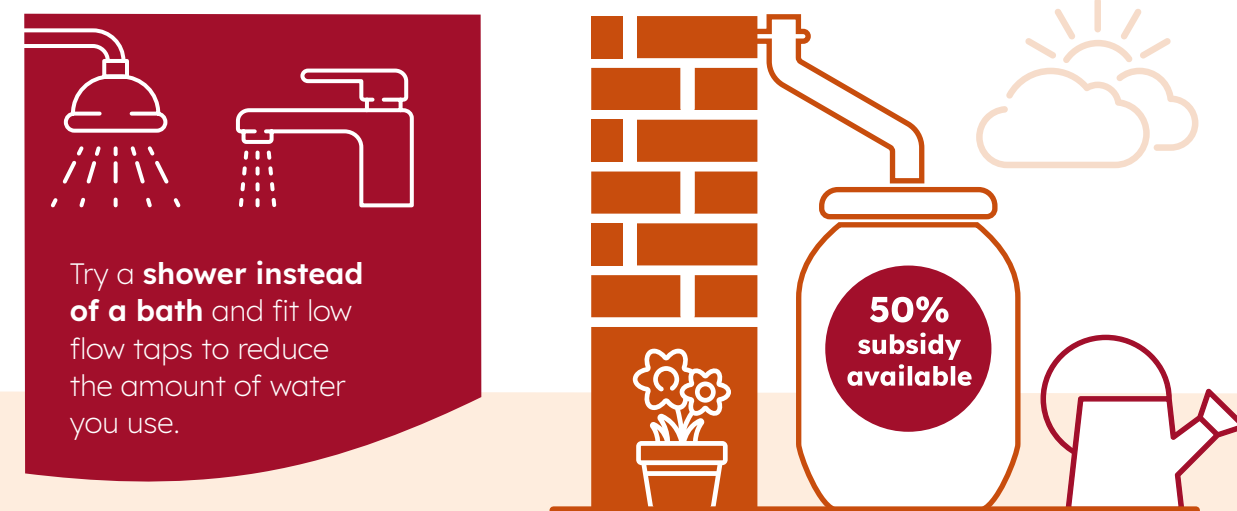
Reducing water usage

Essex is a water stressed area.

We can take some simple steps to use water efficiently and cut our water bills. Check whether your water supplier can provide you with a free water saving kit, like these available from [Essex & Suffolk Water](#) and [Anglian Water](#). Water scarcity is a big deal here in Essex. While it can rain a lot at times, East Anglia is also one of the driest regions in the UK, with droughts and water scarcity projected to increase due to climate change.

The [Water Impact Widget tool](#) on the Waterwise website is a great way to learn more about your water usage, how much it costs and its impact on the environment. The website also offers further advice on how we can save water at home. You can also stay up to date with all the latest UK news on water by signing up to the [monthly Waterwise newsletter](#). The organisation also hosts 'Becoming a water-wise individual' webinars every quarter, and releases blogs where you can broaden your knowledge on water efficiency. You can find out how to become [an individual member of Waterwise](#) as well as discover [annual campaigns](#) to help get involved with saving water.

Water efficiency in the home



A range of water saving shower heads are available which save both water and energy. Try to shorten your shower time to save even more water and energy.

Water Butts are a brilliant way to take advantage of wet weather and reduce mains water consumption. It collects rainwater for use in the garden, conserving water whilst keeping your garden healthy.

As part of [Essex Flood and Water Management's](#) Climate Action initiative, there is a 50% subsidy available on 100 and 200 litre water butt purchases for Essex residents. Visit the [Get Composting](#) website and enter your postcode to access the Essex County Council subsidies for water butts and composters.



The [Essex Water Your Future online explorer](#) offers an overview of the water challenges we face here in Essex. It's an interactive way to explore water issues specific to your area, with links to relevant data and resources.

Top tips to save water at home



Use a **bowl in the sink** when washing up and use the wastewater to water your plants



Take a **shower** instead of a bath



Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth



Use a **water-saving device** in your toilet cistern



Wait until you have a **full load** before using the dishwasher or washing machine



Use a **watering can** rather than a hosepipe



Fit a **water butt** to collect rainwater from your roof



Check your property regularly for **leaks**



For more information on what Essex is doing to help preserve our water, read the [Water Strategy for Essex](#).



You may also find the following websites useful:

- The [Anglian Water website](#) provides tips on how to save water in the garden, bathroom and kitchen
- The [Essex & Suffolk Water website](#) has an online calculator where you can find out how to save water and energy. It also gives information on how eligible households can book a free water efficiency home visit
- Waterwise and the Home Builders Federation have developed [a guide](#) on how to make the most of water saving features in new build homes
- [The Consumer Council for Water \(CCW\)](#) provides impartial advice and guidance for water consumers. This includes how to save money on bills and reduce water usage
- [Water UK](#) enables you to find your water and wastewater provider



3. Food

A climate-friendly diet plays a vital role in helping us all to reduce our carbon footprints.

There are many ways in which we can take into consideration food choices when helping to protect the local environment.

Buying local and in-season can help to reduce the carbon footprint of food by lowering emissions emitted during the transport and logistics process.

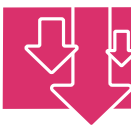
Reducing the amount of food wasted at home is a good way to reduce our carbon footprint and save money.

Currently, **the average Essex household wastes** £83 a month of all the food we buy, around £996 a year⁷ and with some foods having a larger carbon footprint than others, throwing edible food away can have a big hidden cost. Larger households and families often experience even higher costs from food wasted.



Case studies: C3 Impact and 3Food4u.

C3 Impact is an example of a local group where volunteers collect donations of surplus food from local communities which is then given to support families and the elderly who are struggling with the food costs. **3Food4u** is another great example of a community surplus hub which supports over **2000 families each week**. This resulted in **2,350 tonnes of waste saved in 2023**.



Reducing food waste in our households can be simple:

- **make a meal plan.** Check what you already have and create a shopping list with only what you need
- if you have **leftovers**, refrigerate or freeze them and eat at a later date
- **freeze or refrigerate** anything that can't be eaten while it's fresh. Check that **your fridge is set at the right temperature** (between zero and five degrees Celsius) to keep food fresher for longer. Freeze food in small portions so you defrost only what you need
- where possible buy **loose produce** or use refill shops, so you just buy what you need. This avoids unnecessary packaging and can save money
- before getting rid of food, make sure it is definitely **out of date and inedible**. Best before dates provide guidance on the quality of the food but often it can last longer. Pay attention to use by dates as these are about the safety of the food
- some food waste is unavoidable. In these instances, we can recycle it. **Food recycling is free in Essex**. Our recycled food waste is transformed into biogas and fertiliser. The biogas is used to make energy and helps reduce our reliance on fossil fuels
- **composting** is a valuable solution – see section 5

Find **tips from Love Essex** on how to cut down on food waste and make the most out of your leftovers and check out '**Love Food Hate Waste**' to learn more about how to get the most out of the food you buy with recipes and other top tips.

There are also various resources and apps, such as **Giki** and **GreenRedeem** that provide information about food products and beyond. They can tell you anything from whether the packaging is recyclable to whether ingredients were sourced responsibly.



Apps like **Olio** and **Too Good To Go** offer food from restaurants and retailers, that would otherwise have been thrown away.





Food choices

Producing **50g of protein from beef** creates about **25kg of carbon**, while getting the same amount of protein from **chickpeas or lentils** produces only about **420g⁸**. That's a big difference!

25kg
of CO₂



50g of protein
from beef

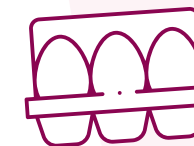
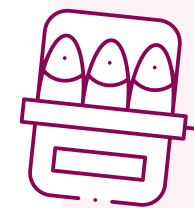
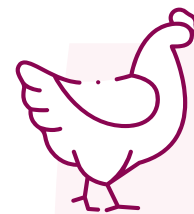
VS

420g
of CO₂



50g of protein
from chickpeas⁸

Following [the UK Eatwell Guide](#) is estimated to reduce an individual's carbon footprint from food by approximately **30% to 32%**. The Eatwell Guide shows how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet. The WWF have developed [an alternative plate](#), the Livewell plate, which further expands upon the links between diet and climate.



Consuming seafood, in general, has a **lower carbon footprint than meat**. However, fish stocks are being overexploited and **some fish carry a high environmental footprint**. [Find out more](#) about the best seafood to choose when at the supermarket, grocers, or fishmongers. Air-freighted fish from other continents, especially lobsters and king prawns, have the highest carbon footprint. Local shellfish such as mussels are always a good bet – they have a lower environmental footprint. Handline caught mackerel and hake can be good too. Buying locally caught fish is a good rule of thumb.

Eggs are also a lower-carbon source of animal protein. Why not support a local business and switch to buying locally sourced eggs.

For fruit and vegetables, try and eat foods that are **in season**. This means that the plants you are eating are fresher and tastier.

Foods that are in season are often sourced locally so have a smaller carbon footprint. Why not buy frozen fruit or vegetables as they are frozen in season and can also save you money!

Vegetable box schemes can be a great way to support more sustainable farmers and local producers. They can also involve much less waste, as they often don't come with unnecessary packaging. They also put a focus on the seasonality of foods, giving you more vegetables and fruits that are in season in your box. Schemes like [Odd Box](#), deliver wonky fruits and vegetables that are delicious and fresh but would otherwise be wasted due to supermarket shape and size standards - fighting food waste and carbon emissions all at once. There are also organic and seasonal fruit and vegetable boxes such as [Riverford](#) and [Abel and Cole](#).



✓ Making informed choices

As you can see, it's not about restricting our diets, but our choices can make a difference.

We can learn more about the [seasonality of foods](#), visit **local farm shops**, grocers and butchers. Local produce has a much lower carbon impact than anything imported, so look out for UK, or even better, Essex producers!

Incorporating some **meat-free days** into your week can be a great starting point – with plant-based alternatives, choices and recipes becoming ever-more available. On the days that we eat meat, we can try to find **local options**. Buying meat locally not only **cuts our environmental footprint significantly**, but it also boosts the local economy by supporting local farmers.

Veganuary is a month-long challenge every January that encourages us all to eat only plant-based meals. You don't need to wait for January, we can use their recipes and resources all year-round to learn new and delicious vegan recipes to incorporate into your usual diet.



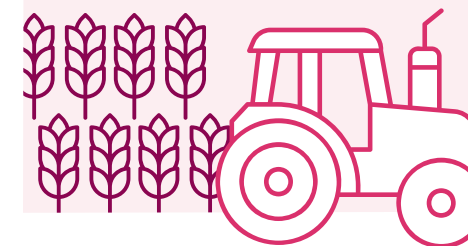
Case Study: Visit Essex

[Visit Essex](#) provides a list of [local producers](#), and highlights [vegan restaurants](#) and cafes across the county.



With our diets, it is important to remember that we don't have to completely cut out major food groups and that **cutting down** on meat, imported and out of season food has a major impact on our carbon footprint.

When shopping in the supermarket, we can watch out for **food which has travelled by air** with this [food miles calculator](#). It is better to buy things closer to home to keep the number of miles food has travelled to a minimum. Fruit and vegetables should have information regarding their origin – so if it's come from far beyond the continent of Europe for example, it will have a bigger carbon footprint. Eating foods which have travelled a long way can really increase our carbon footprint.



One of the most important things we can do to enrich our natural world is to learn more about and to support [sustainable farming](#).

Buying from local farms is even better!



Finding food that protects our planet can sometimes be hard but look out for **organic labels** such as [The Soil Association](#) and the [EU organic label](#).

4. Waste

By only buying what we need, reusing where we can, and choosing to repair items, we can reduce waste in Essex.



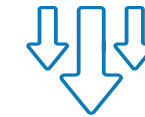
If each of us reduced the amount of rubbish we produce by just three bins a year there would be **100 thousand tonnes less waste** produced in Essex.

Every new product that we buy requires **resources and energy** to produce and transport – which almost always means associated carbon emissions. So, all of us should **really consider what we are buying before we make that purchase**.

Over **three quarters** of the contents of the general rubbish bin in Essex **could have been recycled**⁹

Circular economy

The **circular economy** is a system based on the reuse and regeneration of materials and products in a sustainable or environmentally friendly way. This means avoiding single use items and focusing more on using what we already have, repairing our items, and borrowing from others, as well as recycling.



The Waste Hierarchy

When considering what steps to take, the **waste hierarchy** comes in handy.



The waste hierarchy helps us take steps to **prevent creating unnecessary waste**.

We need to work together to move waste up the waste hierarchy.



PREVENT

Waste prevention is something that councils and government are working with businesses on to reduce the amount of waste that is created in the first place. This also includes only buying what you need and using what you already have.



REUSE

Re-use and repurpose items in your home. **If you don't need something anymore, see if someone else can use it by reselling or giving it away.** See if items can be repaired, as well as opting to borrow, rent or buy second-hand.



RECYCLE

Recycle what you can. Check your [local council's website](#) to see what can be recycled in your area. Find out what your local council collects **kerbside** and what needs to go to the [recycling centre](#). Things like **batteries, electrical items and soft plastics** are often collected at **bring banks** and in **local supermarkets**.



Avoid [wish cycling](#) which is when we assume something can be recycled when in reality it can't! This can be due to different recycling rules in different areas. Wish cycling comes from good intentions but **can end up hindering the recycling process!**



RECOVER

Councils will use **recovery technologies** to recover energy and materials from waste not put in your recycling bins. Energy from Waste treatment means we can make the best use out of rubbish that cannot be recycled. Essex County Council has used Energy from Waste since September 2025.



DISPOSE

Disposing of waste in landfill is the least preferred option as it creates methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Councils in Essex have now stopped using landfill for general rubbish.



The [Waste Strategy for Essex](#) outlines how we propose to tackle waste in Essex.



Before you buy something ask yourself:

- ✓ Do I need it?
- ✓ Can I find it second-hand or borrow it?
- ✓ Can it be repaired?
- ✓ Can it be recycled?
- ✓ Has it been made locally so it has not been transported far?

There are several local schemes supported or provided by Love Essex to help you – such as:

- [Freegle](#)
- [Supporting community projects with the Love Essex Funds](#)
- [Cloth nappy refunds and advice](#)
- [Subsidised compost bins for your home](#)
- [Lighthouse furniture project](#)

Love Essex also provides tips and tricks on how to:

- [Reduce your household waste](#)
- [Get the most out of your recycling](#)

There is also information on:

- [What to do with old electricals](#)
- [Food recycling](#)
- [Food waste reduction](#)
- [Advice on reusable period products](#)
- [Reducing plastic](#)
- [Eco-shops in Essex](#)
- [How to love your clothes](#)



[Sign up to the Love Essex newsletter](#) to keep updated on all things waste.



The [Refill app](#) is home to a vast network of refill stations that encourage water bottle refills to help reduce our plastic waste.



Case Study: Berden Repair Café

Berden hosts a [Repair Café](#) every three months in Berden Village Hall, where residents can get support with repairing various household items so they can use them again and not throw them away. Items which residents can bring include electrical appliances, IT devices, clothing in need of repair, toys, jewellery and bicycles. They also offer a garden tool and scissors sharpening service.

5. Outdoors and Nature

Nature – we're part of it and it's part of us. Let's get closer to our precious environment.

Little actions, starting at home, can make big steps towards nature recovery and climate change resilience in Essex.

Take a look at this [list of 30 actions](#) which you can take to support nature recovery and biodiversity, improve your health, reduce carbon emissions, lower household costs and increase togetherness.

Actions can be taken in our gardens, on our balconies and windowsills, and in our neighbourhood parks; all together creating pockets of nature that join up vital habitats, supporting wildlife to move across our landscape. Take a look at our [Weatherwise Gardens](#) guide to find out how to create a nature friendly garden for our changing climate.

[The Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\)](#) identifies locations to create or improve habitats most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment, accompanied by a series of biodiversity priorities and actions for delivery. There has never been a more critical time to support our environment, and to work together to each do our bit, and collectively care for our natural spaces. The [Essex Local Nature Partnership](#) is an independent partnership looking to increase space for nature across the county, encourage nature friendly farming, and engage with communities to help support their local natural environment.



Case Study: Berden Heritage Wood

Berden is only a small community with less than 200 houses - but has a passion to improve sustainability and strengthen the community for the future. Volunteers have come together to plant a variety of trees in a new heritage wood including hornbeam, oak, rowan and crab apple trees.



Your green and blue space

Got a garden? Why not grow your own fruit and vegetables or re-wild an area of land?

By letting wildflowers grow throughout the year, **biodiversity can increase ten-fold** – promoting natural processes of pollination and other key ecosystem services. This will help bees, insects, birds, and other wildlife to maintain their habitat, to ensure the ecosystem is in balance.

[Growing your own fruit and veg](#) can also significantly cut your **dietary carbon footprint** as well as being host to a fun and engaging project to share with the family and friends.

Composting turns your garden into a natural **carbon sink** which absorbs more carbon than it releases. It takes food and garden waste and transforms them into a rich soil and ecosystem that supports insects and locks carbon away. As the waste stays at home, you avoid the emissions from transporting and processing it. You also end up with a useful soil improver for your garden. To help Essex residents get started with home composting, [Love Essex](#) offers tips and [subsidised compost bins](#). You can also visit the [Get Composting](#) website and enter your postcode to access Essex County Council subsidies on various composters.

**Subsidised
compost bins
available from
Love Essex**





If you don't have a garden, perhaps consider an **allotment**, with more information available on your local council's webpage. This is a great chance to enjoy the outdoors and meet new people. If that's impractical, **window boxes** for fruit and vegetables or herbs work wonders, allowing you to grow your own without even needing a garden. Windowsills and balconies can also be used to create refuge for wildlife, in the form of wildflower planting, bird boxes and green walls. Your local library may have useful resources to help find inspiration.

Tree-planting is another way to take action on climate change. A tree sucks up a lot of carbon from the atmosphere as it grows, and a **mature tree can store that carbon over its lifespan**. Trees also provide **protection against flood risks**. Getting the family involved and learning about the importance of trees from an early age can be great fun.

If you have land that you would like to plant trees in, you may be eligible for support from the **Woodland Trust** which offers free packs to community groups. The packs contain eight different species and give everyone the opportunity to get involved with planting a tree. This is a great way to do your bit to support wildlife and promote sustainability in your local neighbourhood.



For advice on best practice for tree planting in your garden – or to get involved in local tree planting in your community, visit the **Essex Local Nature Recovery Facebook page** to learn more. You can also make enquiries about tree planting to the Essex County Council team at environment@essex.gov.uk.



Paving your garden can **increase your risk of flooding**.

Paving gardens can **increase the risk of flooding** to individual properties and wider communities. Especially following **extreme weather events**, which are projected to increase. A **greener garden** increases the volume of water that can be **naturally absorbed and drained**, to keep you and your property safer.

If you must move to a hard surface, you can use **permeable paving** to give you the functionality you need while still supporting water drainage. If your property has experienced, or is at risk of, flooding internally, what are known as **'Property Flood Resilience'** (PFR) products can be installed. These include items like air brick covers, puddle pumps, flood barriers and doors. A full selection of PFR products and suppliers can be found at the [Blue Pages directory](#).

Green roofs and walls can be created on your house, shed, or even bin shelter. Greening your roofs and walls can help to retain rainfall and reduce risk of flooding, support biodiversity, improve insulation, and help to reduce urban heat effect.

Mini wetlands are a great source of shelter and food for wildlife! Consider creating a mini wetland in your garden, such as a **garden pond** or source of water which can be created using re-used materials such as an old kitchen sink.

Create opportunities for hedgehogs to travel between gardens by creating small access points at the bottom of fences and gates. You could also introduce a hedgehog house in your garden, which you can make at home or purchase from garden centres.



If you are interested in taking action for nature or working within your community to improve your local environment, get in touch today!

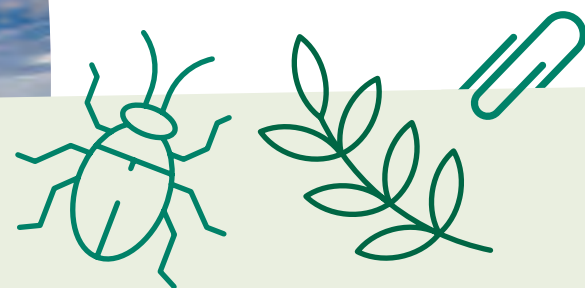
Contact us directly at environment@essex.gov.uk.





Case Study: Newport River Group

The [Newport River Group](#) is a group of more than 30 resident volunteers who are concerned about their local rivers. They are especially keen to improve the river Cam which is a chalk stream, an extremely rare type of waterway. Volunteers and partnerships have worked together to undertake various activities including water quality and aquatic wildlife sampling. This will play a pivotal role in helping to restore river habitats to protect against flooding and improve important chalk stream habitats.



Case Study: Sustainable Stansted

[Sustainable Stansted](#) is a community group working together to help Stansted Mountfitchet village become more sustainable. With funding received from the [Uttlesford Zero Carbon Communities Fund](#) the group commissioned a biodiversity study to identify the most important areas in the village for biodiversity enhancement.



Exploring the great outdoors

Why not invest some time into exploring and connecting with the natural world out walking in Essex's beautiful countryside and [Essex Country Parks](#)! Make sure to follow the [Countryside Code](#), which provides a guide on how to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside in a safe way and without any negative impacts on nature.

Download the [GoJauntly app](#) and visit the [Essex & South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership](#) for some brilliant walks (and how to get there) – a chance to discover the beauty across all corners of Essex.

Spending more time **outside**, especially in the countryside, is a fine way to get closer to the environment – but also to **boost your physical and mental health**. It can be great fun, with a chance to share experiences with family and friends.



Consider [volunteering with local charities and organisations](#) in your local green and blue spaces! Through volunteering or by starting your own local group, you can initiate action to support biodiversity in your local area. Volunteering can provide good exercise, as well as meeting new people and enjoying being part of the community. Volunteering in your local community garden can support efforts for community food growing and sharing of local resources.

Some local volunteering initiatives include the following:

- [Essex Wildlife Trust](#)
- [RSPB Local Groups](#)
- [The Conservation Volunteers Essex](#)



6. Buying Tips

Using Your Buying Power to Make a Difference

As Essex continues its journey toward a cleaner, greener future, small everyday choices made by residents can have a big impact. The Essex County Council Procurement Team works to ensure that the products and services we buy as an organisation are sustainable and many of these principles can be applied at home too.

Here are some simple, practical ways you can help reduce pollution and protect the environment through smarter purchasing decisions.



Choose Local and Low Impact Products

Buying closer to home means fewer delivery miles, which helps cut down on pollution and supports Essex businesses.

Look for locally sourced food, materials, and services wherever possible. Fewer miles travelled means less harm to the environment and stronger local communities.



Pick Reusable Over Disposable

Single use items create more waste and need replacing often.

Switch to reusable water bottles, coffee cups, shopping bags, or rechargeable batteries. These options reduce waste and save you money over time.



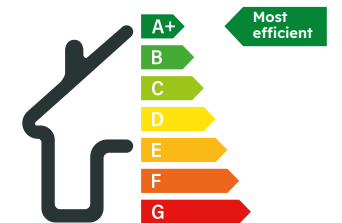
Check for Environmental Certifications

Eco labels make it easier to choose products that are better for the planet.

Look for trusted marks such as:

- Energy Efficiency Labels (A–G)
- FSC® for responsibly sourced paper and wood
- EU Ecolabel
- Fairtrade

These labels show that the products meet environmental and ethical standards.



Think Long-Term: Buy Less, Buy Better

Cheaper products often wear out faster. Choosing durable items with good warranties reduces waste and the need to replace things frequently.

This “buy better” approach helps cut long term costs and reduces your impact on the planet.



Consider the Whole Lifecycle

Before buying something new, ask yourself:

- can I repair this instead of replacing it?
- can I donate or recycle it later?
- is there a second-hand option?

Essex reuse shops, charity stores, and social enterprises offer affordable and sustainable alternatives.



Reduce Home Energy Use with Smart Purchases

Small upgrades in your home can make a big difference.

Energy saving choices include:

- LED light bulbs
- smart thermostats
- draught proofing
- insulation (with support available through national and local schemes)

These improvements help reduce wasted energy and lower your bills.





Choose Greener Travel Options

When buying travel-related products or services, consider options that create less pollution, such as:

- bikes and e bikes
- car clubs or electric vehicle rentals
- public transport
- fuel efficient or electric cars when replacing your vehicle

These choices help cut traffic and improve air quality across Essex.



Avoid Fast Fashion Where Possible

The clothing industry has a big impact on the environment.

You can help by:

- buying fewer, longer lasting clothes
- choosing recycled or organic materials
- repairing or altering garments
- supporting local charity shops and reuse schemes



Support Responsible and Transparent Suppliers

Just as ECC checks suppliers' environmental efforts, you can choose brands that:

- share clear environmental policies
- use less packaging
- offer low-impact delivery options
- use recycled or sustainably sourced materials

Your buying choices help encourage more responsible business practices.



Use the Sharing Economy

Sometimes the greenest choice is not buying anything at all.

Try:

- borrowing tools from local "library of things" schemes
- renting equipment you only need occasionally
- sharing with neighbours and community groups

This reduces waste, saves money, and brings communities together.



Case Study: Wivenhoe Library of Things

The Wivenhoe Library of Things allows residents and communities to borrow various DIY tools and equipment. This reduces waste by stopping people buying something which is only likely to be used once or twice for projects.

Together, We Can Make Essex Greener

Small, thoughtful choices made by thousands of residents add up to a big difference. By choosing smarter, more sustainable options, you're helping Essex move towards a cleaner, healthier future.



7. Green Skills, Jobs and Training

The growing green economy in Essex is creating new opportunities for jobs, skills and careers across the county.

From renewable energy to home retrofit and green transport, the shift to a low carbon economy means more roles that support environmental goals while offering long term employment.

Growing Green Sectors in Essex

Key areas of growth include:

- renewable energy (offshore wind, solar and battery installation)
- low carbon heating and home retrofitting, including heat pumps and insulation
- electric vehicle charging and maintenance
- cycling, walking and broader active travel services
- horticulture, nature recovery and environmental management
- circular economy roles such as repair, reuse and materials recovery

Case Study: New Life Wood

New Life Wood provides work placement opportunities for those who are finding it difficult to seek employment. The charity collects and recycles surplus timber which is then used to support with woodwork skills and life skills training offered to local vulnerable adults.

Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible training for adults looking to build skills for in demand green careers. Skills Bootcamps relevant to low carbon sectors include:

- heat pump installation and low carbon heating
- solar panel installation
- retrofit coordination and assessment (PAS2035)
- EV charging installation and EV maintenance
- environmental management and biodiversity
- low carbon construction and building performance

Most Skills Bootcamps include a guaranteed interview for residents who complete training.

Connect to Work

Funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, **Connect to Work** offers support to people with disabilities, health conditions, and other barriers to employment. The programme is open to residents across Essex, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock.

It helps residents move into employment in priority sectors, including those supporting environmental sustainability. Connect to Work provides tailored employment support, and can help link residents with local green employers.



8. Useful Apps and Resources



Sustainable Essex

Check out our brand new [Sustainable Essex website](#). The website hosts various resources to help you get started on your sustainability journey as well as information on local events, volunteering opportunities, grants, and so much more. It also gives examples of case studies featuring environmental projects from across the county to help you get inspired on how you can incorporate environmental action as part of your day-to-day lifestyle.



Carbon Cutting Essex app

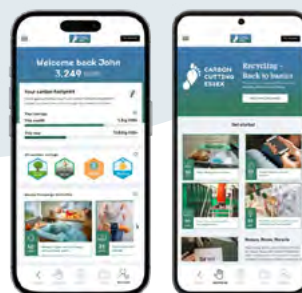
[The Carbon Cutting Essex app](#) helps us reduce our individual carbon footprints.

Carbon Cutting Essex inspires us all to make small daily sustainable changes that can have a big impact on climate change. Watch videos, take quizzes and make pledges to take action on climate. Users earn points for each action taken which can be used for discounts on the in-app eco-shop, to enter prize draws and be donated to good causes.

Users of the Carbon Cutting Essex app now have the option of donating their points to a local primary school, secondary school or early years setting. The school which receives the highest number of points will win a Schools' Sustainability Kit. The kits contain various educational items to inspire young people to get involved with helping the local environment, such as bug houses, books and gardening kits.



The free app is available for download on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).



Useful apps

Carbon Calculators are really handy when you want to know the impact anything has on your carbon footprint.

But there are also plenty of apps that can help you make small changes to your lifestyle. These can include:

- [Carbon Cutting Essex](#)
- [Carbon Savvy](#)
- [Klima](#)
- [Olio](#)
- [GreenRedeem](#)
- [Eevie](#)
- [Earth Hero](#)
- [Too Good To Go](#)
- [Carbon Donut](#)
- [Change It](#)
- [Giki](#)



Community Resources

Many local town and parish councils around Essex are going further and further in their efforts to be environmentally pro-active.

To find out more and how to be involved, check out the [Essex Association of Local Councils' website](#).



Essex-based social media pages



Facebook:

- [Sustainable Essex](#)
- [Eco - Essex](#)
- [Essex Climate Action](#)
- [Essex Local Nature Recovery](#)
- [Essex Wildlife Trust](#)
- [Love Essex](#)



LinkedIn:

- [Sustainable Essex](#)
- [Essex Climate Action](#)



YouTube:

- [Essex Climate Action](#)
- [Love Essex](#)



Instagram:

- [Sustainable Essex](#)
- [Eco - Essex \(@ecoesssex\)](#)
- [Essex Climate Action \(@essexclimatecommission\)](#)
- [Essex Wildlife Trust \(@essexwildlifetrust\)](#)
- [Love Essex \(@loveessexuk\)](#)



X (formerly Twitter):

- [Essex Climate Action \(@essex_climate\)](#)
- [Essex Wildlife Trust \(@EssexWildlife\)](#)



National social media pages



Facebook:

- [Energy Saving Trust](#)
- [Royal Horticultural Society](#)



X (formerly Twitter):

- [Royal Horticultural Society \(@The_RHS\)](#)



Instagram:

- [Energy Saving Trust \(@energysavingtrust\)](#)
- [Royal Horticultural Society \(@the_RHS\)](#)



Website:

- [Jules Pretty's blog](#)

Conclusion

Climate change is real, it's now, we have to do something about it – and the good news is that we can.

All of the actions outlined in this pack can help us to make a start in reducing our own impacts and carbon footprint. We can all act to improve our lives and our planet.

Our choices can truly make a difference and will shape Essex today and in the future.

We are keen to make sure that this document remains relevant and helpful to residents over time. As such, we aim to produce updated versions of this action pack as discussions, legislation and priorities around sustainability issues evolve. If you have any ideas or resources which could be included in this pack – or if you think your local community group could feature as a case study – we would like to hear from you. Please contact: environment.climatecommunications@essex.gov.uk

References

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- 6 [How different households use energy and how much it costs them | Nesta](#)
- 7 Love Essex website. <https://www.loveessex.org/ideas/food-waste>
- 8 Mike Berners Lee: How Bad Are Bananas, 2020
- 9 “Over three quarters of the contents of the general rubbish bin in Essex could have been recycled.” <https://www.loveessex.org/what-happens-your-recycling-and-waste/what-happens-general-rubbish/find-out-more-about-energy-waste>



This information is issued by:
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Sustainable Essex is Essex County Council's home for environment and sustainability, bringing together projects, news, events, advice and partners to highlight the work being done to protect and improve Essex for everyone who lives and works here.

sustainable.essex.gov.uk

Sustainable Essex:



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Stay up to date with the Your Essex, Sustainable Essex and Essex Climate Action e-newsletters. For a monthly snapshot of news, events and activities across the county, sign up at:

www.essex.gov.uk/youressex

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