

Essex Schools  
Food and Farming  
Day is back

Rural affordable  
housing options  
for local people

Leading the way  
with 'Outstanding'  
outdoor education

# OYSTER

THE VOICE OF RURAL ESSEX

Issue 49  
Spring/Summer  
2023



## Specialist Charity Insurance Broker

Norris & Fisher are a leading specialist charity insurance broker with the personnel and resources to provide unrivalled service, outstanding value, and tailored scheme policies that meet the needs of your Charity or Community Group.

We can provide free, no obligation quotes for:

- Village Halls
- Food Banks
- Good Neighbour Groups
- Short Mat Bowls Clubs
- Any Charity, Not-For-Profit Organisation or Community Group

Contact us for more information or to discuss your requirements on  
**023 8026 9009** or email us: [contact@norrissandfisher.com](mailto:contact@norrissandfisher.com)

**[www.norrissandfisher.com](http://www.norrissandfisher.com)**



Norris & Fisher (Insurance Brokers) Ltd - Registered Office: Threefield House, Threefield Lane Southampton SO14 3LP.  
Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered in England & Wales: 04567558



@RCCEssex  
 01376 574330  
 www.essexrcc.org.uk

Cover photo: Warrior Toddler  
Nature Nursery, Larkrise Pictures



## From the Director

### Contents

From the Director.....	3
Rural affordable housing options for local people .....	4
Leading the way with 'Outstanding' outdoor education .....	6
Congratulations to Kelly Coombs!.....	9
Village Halls Conference 2023.....	10
Sleep Well update.....	11
United in Kind .....	13
Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund... ..	14
Buckingham Palace garden party ....	14
A warm welcome in warm spaces....	15
New Rural Crime Strategy commits to reducing crime and vulnerability across Essex rural communities .....	16
Essex Schools Food & Farming Day is back!.....	18
Local Insight Data Service .....	19
How RET are helping to keep our rural communities safe .....	20

These words are written in Rural Housing Week, an annual campaign to highlight the importance of providing affordable housing in rural communities. The cost-of-living crisis we are going through has only added to the urgency of this issue, although here in Essex where the most affordable home in some rural areas can cost 12 times average earnings, RCCE has led the way in raising awareness of the problem for more than 30 years.

In recent times, we've made a real impact on the ground through our Rural Housing Enabler service \*(see page 4) which works with local parish councils, specialist rural housing providers and local authorities to facilitate small-scale schemes developed in accordance with the identified needs of the community concerned. Augmenting this, our Rural Housing Advisory Group brings the key partners together to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the issue across the county.

Talk of affordable housing can cause alarm for some rural residents but these schemes, which can sometimes comprise as few as 4 new homes, are about sustaining rural communities not swamping them. If young people and families can no longer afford to live in the place they consider home and where they may well have work, it will have lasting consequences not just for them but for businesses, essential services and community life in our villages.

Everyone concerned with tackling the rural

housing problem will have been encouraged by an announcement from the Government in June that it will be creating a £2.5 million fund to support a national network of Rural Housing Enablers. Exactly how this will work and how we can benefit from it in Essex will not become apparent for a while, but RCCE will certainly be looking to make the most of this opportunity.

The announcement on Rural Housing Enablers was just part of a broader package of measures entitled 'Unleashing Rural Opportunity', which included pledges on digital connectivity, transport, rural crime and on extending the Platinum Jubilee Fund for Village Halls, from which several Essex halls have recently secured funding \*(see page 14). There was also a commitment to review the way rural deprivation is measured. This might not be immediately eye-catching but could in the long-term help rural areas obtain a fairer share of public funding.

The next General Election is now no more than 18 months away so there will almost certainly be more pledges to come from all the major political parties. With 17% of the population of England living in rural areas, it will be vital for organisations like RCCE and its counterparts in the ACRE Network to ensure the rural voice is heard.

**Nick Shuttleworth**  
Executive Director



“Engaging with your local community is essential to identify what their needs and aspirations might be over the next 5 years.”

## Rural affordable housing options for local people

Due in part to its proximity to London and Cambridge, the house prices in Essex are some of the highest in the Eastern region with the average house price in the county of £414,846 (as at February 2023).

As a result, I am often asked by Parish Councillors and Neighbourhood Planning groups to explain what their options are when it comes to rural affordable housing to allow local people to live and remain in the area they grew up or have support networks.

I thought it would help to set out some information below as food for thought. Parish Councils can often be hindered by the uncertainty of emerging Local Plans, especially where speculative development opportunities are increasingly presented to them out of the blue. The myriad of options and pathways can also be overwhelming. This article touches on elements to

consider at the beginning of your journey into assessing your local housing need and providing suitable housing solutions for your community.

**Before looking at any housing options, the first step is to ASSESS your need.**

Assessment of your local housing need by a **Housing Needs Survey** is a key starting point for any Parish Council or Neighbourhood Plan Group interested in responding to their local housing challenges. Engaging with your local community is essential to identify what their needs and aspirations might be over the next 5 years. This is particularly useful in terms of determining which size, type and



tenure of housing should be considered, but the survey also enables you to gauge community support and interest. This survey is valid for 5 years, after which time it will require updating to ensure it still truly reflects the needs of your community. These surveys are not to justify large scale developments and cannot be used for that.

## **The next step is to use this evidence of need to EVALUATE your options.**

**Affordable Housing** as defined in the current National Planning Policy Framework is for those whose needs are not met by the market. This includes a range of properties for rent and sale.

Affordable rent (80% of market value) or social rent (60% of market value) properties are typically managed by rural housing associations, although communities who choose models through Community Led Housing projects can manage the homes themselves should they wish. Affordable housing for sale include models such as shared ownership, rent to buy, starter homes (first time buyers only) or discounted local sale (usually at least 20% off market value). The selection of the most suitable type of affordable housing will usually be determined by the results of your Housing Needs Survey, in conjunction with continued community engagement and assessment of the viability of the scheme.

**Rural Exception Sites** (supported by the local authority Rural Exception Site Policy) apply to rural parishes of less than 3,000 in population and provide primarily affordable housing for local residents in perpetuity. Occasionally, open market housing is permitted if required for the viability of the site but no scheme will progress without there being evidence of need. Schemes on these sites are typically small in size and built and managed by rural specialist housing associations, who work closely with the Parish Council, community and landowner to develop a scheme everyone can be proud of and which will benefit the local community for years to come.

**Community Led Housing** groups are community focussed local volunteers who are empowered to develop housing or other assets that meet the needs of that specific community. Community Led Housing options include; cohousing, cooperatives, community self-build, almshouses and community land trusts. These community groups do not have to go it alone and can partner with housing associations or other interested parties (such



as local builders) but will always retain control of the project to ensure any home or asset remains affordable in perpetuity.

RCCE is part of a Community Led Housing Hub for the East of England called Eastern Community Homes; <https://easterncommunityhomes.com/> which provides support to communities as they progress community led housing projects in conjunction with housing experts and relevant planning authorities.

**Neighbourhood Planning Groups** can also look to include aspirations for affordable housing for local people within their plans. An example of plans that have achieved this can be found in Thaxted in Essex and Lavenham in Suffolk, both of which have also created a Community Land Trust to secure their affordable housing in perpetuity for local people.

## **Once you have identified your need and chosen your pathway to achieve this, the next key step in this process is to SELECT your site and partners.**

Identifying suitable land is key to bringing affordable housing for local people to rural areas. I can support you through landowner engagement and the process for selecting a housing association partner.

One thing to highlight is that as the Rural Housing Enabler, I am here to empower and guide you through your options from an impartial standpoint. For more information or to discuss your local options either as a Parish Council or as Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group please contact me.

**Laura Atkinson**



**“As the Rural Housing Enabler, I am here to empower and guide you through your options from an impartial standpoint.”**

**Laura Atkinson**  
**RCCE's Rural Housing Enabler**  
Tel: 01376 574330  
Email: [laura.atkinson@essexrcc.org.uk](mailto:laura.atkinson@essexrcc.org.uk)

**Affordable Rural Housing**  
[www.essexrcc.org.uk](http://www.essexrcc.org.uk)



## Leading the way with 'Outstanding' outdoor education

**Essex Wildlife Trust's pioneering outdoor nursery has been given an Outstanding rating by Ofsted.**

Based at the Trust's main office in Great Wigborough, the Nature Nursery was launched in September 2021 after several years of research and development and has received top marks in its first inspection.

The Trust has been a national leader in outdoor education for many years, running Forest School sessions for children since 2008 and delivering Forest School training since



2014, working with schools across Essex to offer outdoor sessions in their curriculum.

However, the Nature Nursery is the first time that the Trust has provided full-time outdoor education and childcare for children aged 2 to 5 years old.

"We are so proud of the Nature Nursery and the Ofsted rating," said Mel Mewton, the Trust's Nature Nursery Manager. "The aim of our nursery is to help secure a healthier, happier, and more sustainable future. A future where every child is 'wild' is a

future where the planet is in good hands."

The nursery follows the statutory Early Years curriculum, but almost all learning takes place outdoors. The nursery particularly encourages creativity and independence, providing meadows, woodland, vegetable gardens, mounds, climbing structures, shelters, log fires, and a yurt.

Children learn through child-led, nature-based exploration and activities led by expert Early Years professionals who are passionate about the natural world.

Ofsted praised the nursery for being "idyllic". It considered the curriculum to be "ambitious" where children make "exceptional progress in their learning", highlighting academic achievement as well as their relationship with

**Ofsted praised the nursery for being “idyllic”. It considered the curriculum to be “ambitious” where children make “exceptional progress in their learning.”**

nature, including their maths and language development.

The children become “considerate citizens who care for their world,” the report said.

Success with Ofsted is just the beginning though. Rich Yates, Director of Engagement for Essex Wildlife Trust, said: “We hope that the Nature Nursery is the first of many. Our aim is for outdoor nurseries to be a mainstream alternative to indoor-based early years childcare and education. We would love to see other providers follow this example and give parents and carers real choice.

The children at the Nature Nursery spend all day every day outdoors and their relationship to nature and one

another is so strong. Most of our three-year-olds can tell the difference between the call of a blue tit and the call of a great tit. They are much closer to the physical world they live in and the world they need to protect. We think it’s the future, and we hope other people will share our view.”

Mel Mewton confirms that there are still spaces available. “We are looking forward to welcoming a new cohort of Nature Nursery attendees in September and invite anyone interested to come to an Open Day and see our nursery in person.”

**Visit the Essex Wildlife Trust website to find out more.**

*Photos: Nature Nursery  
Essex Wildlife Trust*





## The King's Award for Voluntary Service

The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) aims to recognise outstanding local volunteering groups from across the UK.

Created in 2002 to celebrate the anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II Coronation it is the **highest award given to local volunteer groups**, is the **equivalent to an MBE**, and is **awarded for life**.

Nominate a group now at:  
[kavs.dcms.gov.uk](http://kavs.dcms.gov.uk)

### WHO CAN BE NOMINATED FOR THE AWARD?

Any volunteer-led group undertaking work in their local community can be nominated; however, they must meet some basic criteria:

- be made up of three or more people
- be based in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man
- have been in operation for at least three years before nomination
- have over half its volunteers eligible to reside in the UK
- be led by volunteers, not by paid staff
- provide a specific and direct benefit to the local community

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- Royal Recognition
- Signed Certificate from His Majesty The King
- Award's Crystal
- Invitations to the Royal Garden Parties
- Right to use The King's Award Emblem across the group's promotional material and website



  
Department  
for Culture,  
Media & Sport

**Website:** [kavs.dcms.gov.uk](http://kavs.dcms.gov.uk)

**Email:** [kingsaward@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:kingsaward@dcms.gov.uk)



# Congratulations to Kelly Coombs!

**Kelly Coombs works for RCCE as a Community Agent in the Dengie Area and also a United in Kind Coach in Chelmsford. We are extremely proud of Kelly who has been awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for a project she set up on a voluntary basis giving up her free time to help others.**

Below Kelly describes the work she did and how it feels to be recognised for such a prestigious award.

“It’s been truly heart warming and overwhelming to be recognised by His Majesty in his first New Years Honours List with the Order of the British Empire Medal. When I opened the email from the Cabinet Office, I thought it was a hoax, when I realised it was real I was in total shock as it all seemed so long ago, as back in January 2021 I had an acorn of an idea that grew into an huge tree of kindness. We

were in covid lockdown and morale was very low amongst our wonderful local key workers. I set up a Facebook Group named Dengie Kindness Group and posted on our local community Facebook pages that if anyone had any spare toiletries, chocolates, biscuits, treats etc that I would like to put together Hero Hug Bags for our local NHS & Emergency Services. The Dengie Community all pulled together & demonstrated their kindness & generosity, we were blessed with the help of doorstep co-ordinators in every village so it was easy for people to drop off



their donations. The kindness continued with talented crafts people who made and donated keyrings, candles, bath bombs, face masks, bookmarks, bracelets, sweets, hot chocolate stirrers, crochet and knitted hearts. Local children, schools & pre-schools all made wonderful pictures, cards and letters some are still displayed today in some windows around the Dengie.

A generous local farmer loaned us a farm unit for two months to store and sort all the donations, we called it the ‘Hug Hub’. We had wonderful volunteers that came to the hub to drop off donations and help put the hampers and bags together always adhering to the government restrictions. With the communities kindness we put together over 325 Bags and Hampers. These were distributed around the whole of Dengie to all key workers including NHS Staff including district nursing team, GP Surgeries, ambulance station & pharmacies as well as the emergency services fire stations & police stations. It didn’t stop there but extended to postal workers, care home workers, pre-schools, schools, essential shop workers and undertakers. It really did boost their moral during a

very challenging time and they were overwhelmed to know that their local community had thought about them and showed them kindness. No donation was wasted as we did a weekly drop of treats to Broomfield Hospital staff including scrubs that had been made by people within the local community and donations of travel size toiletries to Chelmsford Rough Sleepers and food items that were not suitable for hampers were donated to Dengie Food Pantry. In May & October 2021 we also purchased 25 Dolce Gusto Coffee Pod Machines for all the ward staff rooms using money raised by the local community.

The Dengie Kindness Group is still running today – we have over 1,000 members who are all ready to help when needed. We pulled together providing donations for Ukraine and also when a devastating fire happened at a local petting zoo the community were wonderful in donating cages, hutches, straw, food etc. I honestly could not have achieved the BEM without the kindness and generosity of the Dengie community where I am lucky to live and work. Thank you for everyone’s continuing support – Kelly.



# Village Halls Conference 2023

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September at  
East Hanningfield Village Hall  
9.30am Registration Closes 3pm**



**On the day you will hear from various speakers including:**

- **Utility Aid who will be demonstrating their remote energy audit service**
- **Essex County Council who will be speaking on the sustainable village hall**
- **A Project Manager who will be explaining the importance of professional services**
- **Trustees of East Hanningfield on their success with the Platinum Jubilee Fund and their project so far**
- **Hallmark - the benefits of accreditation**
- **A presentation from a well known funder**

**.....and much more**

**For a full agenda, cost and a booking form please contact RCCE's  
Village Halls and Community Buildings Adviser Danielle Frost:**

**[danielle.frost@essexrcc.org.uk](mailto:danielle.frost@essexrcc.org.uk)**



## Sleep Well update

**In 2020, during the covid pandemic, an estimated ten million volunteers stepped up for their communities, helping to support and care in a huge variety of ways.**

The entire country bore witness to the awe-inspiring mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of dedicated, volunteer sewers, who cut, stitched and donated millions of pieces of handmade PPE for our NHS. Volunteering at that time felt like such a powerful way to support the community from the safety of our living rooms and helping felt so good! What then, I asked myself at 2am, sitting in A&E last year, would happen, if we called on those kind people for a second time? Would they still be ready to answer the call? Thread in hand? – and this time to sew for the patients of the NHS...

And answer, they did! Last November, amazing volunteers from across the county (and beyond) united in kindness and made and donated a whopping two-hundred sleep/eye masks to be given to patients of the MSE hospital trust (Basildon, Southend and Broomfield Hospitals). Exquisite, lovingly handmade eye masks, sometimes with matching bags, were donated to Broomfield Hospital in Chelmsford. They were extremely well received by the nurses and ward staff with patients reportedly

feeling a sense of increased wellbeing and care. Certain wards, by necessity, have their lights on all the time and these little homely gifts, with a practical purpose, bring much-needed respite for those in need of rest and recuperation.

Since November another batch of masks have been donated - but there is still so much to do! The 'Sleep Well' campaign remains active and ongoing. All three hospitals are again requesting masks; lack of sleep is known to be one of the biggest hurdles to improving a patient's hospital experience and consequently they absolutely love them!

Volunteering helps to support our communities across Essex and our NHS, it serves also to improve our own sense of connection and wellbeing; doing good makes us feel good! We're changing the world, one mask at a time, brightening days and darkening nights. If you'd like to volunteer for Sleep Well, you can be assured that every mask is valued and makes a difference (patterns available on request).



**“Lack of sleep is known to be one of the biggest hurdles to improving a patient’s hospital experience and consequently they absolutely love them!”**

**Please contact :**

**Rebecca Morton  
Essex Wellbeing Service  
Volunteer Facilitator  
Rebecca.morton@ceessex.org.uk**

# ESSEX COUNTY HARVEST SERVICE



at Chelmsford Cathedral

**Sunday 24th September**  
**at 3.30pm**

Everyone welcome to the service  
and afterwards for refreshments



# United in Kind

It has been a really busy start to Summer for our United in Kind coaches who have been working on two campaigns; Dementia Action Week followed by Loneliness Awareness Week.

These campaigns are an opportunity for the coaches to highlight the support that is available to residents across Essex and to organise and work with partners to bring people together in the community.

For Dementia Action Week the Chelmsford coach worked with the Alzheimer's Society and Chelmsford library to host a large community network event which saw over 20 organisations host a table and engage with residents who are living with dementia or caring for someone with dementia. It was an opportunity for people to find out what support is available to them and the feedback from one attendee shows how useful it was,

'This has been a wonderful event as it has been reassuring to talk to other people and organisations that understand

our situation that we are living with on a daily basis – thank you.'

Other activities that took place across the week included hosting dementia friendly cinema screenings, businesses and community venues across Essex high streets created blue window displays in support of the campaign, school pupils made and coloured forget me not flowers, and volunteers from the Hug in a Shrug project and other local knitting groups made hundreds of crocheted forget me not flowers, twiddle mitts, bookmarks, keyrings, brooches and post-box toppers which were displayed across the county and gifted to people living with dementia and their families/carers.

For Loneliness Awareness Week this year United in Kind wanted to focus on bringing



people together in outdoor spaces to encourage them to participate in biodiversity projects as a way of reducing social isolation but also to highlight the importance of protecting our local environments.

Throughout Essex the coaches hosted nature walks, litter picks, community allotment coffee mornings, and a Nordic walk and picnic event. In Basildon the United in Kind coach worked in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust and hosted a Bioblitz event at Pitsea Mount where local residents came together to seek out wildflowers and record them to get an idea of the biodiversity in the area. All of this work was done with support from United in Kind volunteers, alongside community groups and organisations and the coaches achieved their aim of bringing people together United in Nature.

**“This has been a wonderful event as it has been reassuring to talk to other people and organisation’s that understand our situation that we are living with on a daily basis – thank you.”**



Let's connect our community with kindness

To find out more about United in Kind work please click here.





## Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund

The Platinum Jubilee Fund was officially launched in December 2022 with Essex receiving 18 successful applications for the Stage 1 process.

The £3 million fund over two years, was to help village halls and community buildings to make capital improvements to enhance the quality of life of the residents they serve. The Stage 2 process was both competitive and challenging, requiring multiple quotes, good governance of the project and a mandate from the community and hirers to reflect both need and ultimate benefit.

The total amount of funding available in 2023 was vastly outstripped by the number of applications across the country. Indeed, if all the applications submitted to Stage 2 had been successful, there wouldn't have been enough money in the pot. That is why we are so proud of the village halls and community buildings who entered the stage 2 process. Of the 9 who submitted to the stage 2 panel, 5 were offered grants, 1 was asked to supply more information and 1 is pending their result. Their projects ranged from roof replacements, installation of accessibility toilets, installation of solar panels, replacing heating systems and kitchens.

Congratulations to all, especially to the 5 village halls listed below who each received a grant:

- Takeley Silver Jubilee Hall
- Wormingford Village Hall
- East Hanningfield Village Hall
- Hatfield Heath Village Hall
- Little Yeldham Village Hall

# Buckingham Palace garden party

Laura Stacey is the Locality Lead for Mid Essex within the Essex Wellbeing Service and is part of the Community Agent Management Team. She has worked for RCCE since 2009. Here she talks about her recent unforgettable afternoon as the RCCE representative at Buckingham Palace.



was joined by The Princess of Wales, The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, The Princess Royal and The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.

The entire day was a once in a lifetime, surreal experience. We dined on pea and mint sandwiches, salmon rosettes and the most delicious ice cream that I have ever tasted. All consumed whilst sat next to the pond listening to the royal brass band. We met so many people and it was really inspiring to hear all the stories from the community workers and learn about the fantastic work that has been going on in their areas.

We truly had the most delightful day and one that I will remember always. I would like to extend my thanks to the RCCE for giving me such a wonderful opportunity.

A few months ago, I was informed that I had been given the huge honour of being nominated to represent the RCCE in attending a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace to celebrate the Coronation of his Majesty King Charles III.

My husband and I donned our finest outfits and travelled to London on May 9th, two days after the Coronation itself and joined the crowds of people queuing in anticipation clutching our prestigious invitation.

Once through the gates, the sight that met us was breathtaking, the immaculately manicured gardens, the stunning architecture of the palace itself and not to mention the beautifully dressed 8000 people in attendance. The national anthem sounded as our hosts made their entrance onto the palace steps representation was made on behalf of The King, by The Prince of Wales who





funding granted by Essex County Council's, Community Winter Warmth and Welcome Fund, delivered by the Essex Association of Local Councils.

Earlier this year, I enjoyed a beautiful winter walk on the footpaths around the village of Great Maplestead. I came across a sign, welcoming me into the Warm Haven inside St Giles Church. Needless to say, I couldn't resist! It didn't disappoint. It was toasty warm on a cold day and it was such a haven, I struggled to leave!

**“It was toasty warm on a cold day and it was such a haven, I struggled to leave!”**

and food prices, we are also facing financial challenges. In acknowledging these issues St Giles Church will be offering the Tower Room as a warm haven, and all are welcome to make use of this space. The room will be open during daylight hours, refreshments will be available for you to help yourself, books and magazines will be provided to read or borrow. If you want to bring your laptop or phone to work, Wifi is available. Stay for as long as you like, you might meet others there or you might not, either way you are most welcome to use the space as often as you like.”

**Revd Canon Janet Nicholls  
Rural Adviser and Agricultural  
Chaplain Diocese of  
Chelmsford**

# A warm welcome in warm spaces

**As we enjoy the warmth of summer, we might be keen to forget the long winter of 2022-23!**

The winter months brought additional difficulties this year with many people finding the rising cost of living extremely challenging. With wholesale energy prices rising by 54% in April 2022, many predicted a tough winter ahead as the rise in fuel costs hit the domestic market. It was a stark reminder that a warm home is a luxury that certainly can't be taken for granted. Many of us made it a priority to look after each other, ensuring food and warmth was shared in our rural communities.

For centuries our parish churches have been places of sanctuary during difficult times. We encourage parishes to have their churches unlocked

during daylight hours whenever possible. Visitors seeking peace, quiet and rest in our busy world often speak of the gentle refreshment found in these ancient Houses of Prayer. They haven't typically been the places we head to for warming-up in the middle of winter though!

But this winter the temperature was a little more appealing in some of our parish churches. Many of our rural communities identified spaces in community facilities such as churches and village halls which could become warm hubs for anyone to access during the winter months. Good intentions became reality for some communities with the

You might like to read Revd Beverley Vincent's words of invitation to the Great Maplestead's Warm Haven below. Perhaps her words will inspire us to start planning our community warm spaces for next winter!

“Winter can be a difficult time for some, it can be isolating with the shorter days and cold weather and this winter with rising costs of energy



# New Rural Crime Strategy commits to reducing crime and vulnerability across Essex rural communities

The previous strategy, which completed its four-year term in 2021 saw a significant reduction in rural crimes.

Unauthorised encampments were reduced by more than 70 per cent, hare coursing saw a reduction of 10 per cent and the theft of large machinery by 36 per cent.

Following feedback from rural communities, the new rural crime strategy will go even further, with a stronger focus on tackling all crimes within rural communities, supporting community empowerment, protecting vulnerable and isolated rural communities, and

supporting victims of crime.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst stated: "Essex has a large rural community that makes a huge contribution to our county. We already work well with our rural communities, but we want to make an even bigger difference to their safety and security by helping them build greater resilience, prioritise the crime that matters to them, support victims and protect the vulnerable."



Nick Shuttleworth, Essex Rural Partnership said: "Essex Rural Partnership brings together a wide range of organisations concerned with the future of the county's rural areas. Rural crime is an important issue for the Partnership, and we are committed to supporting Essex Police and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner in taking forward this refreshed strategy."

The Essex Rural Crime Strategy 2023-2026 sets out the vision of Essex Police, the Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) to work together to create a safe, secure, and resilient rural community.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, Essex Police and the Essex Rural Partnership outlined the new rural crime strategy 2023 – 2026 at a public event held at Layer Marney Tower earlier this year.

**"Rural crime is an important issue for the Partnership, and we are committed to supporting Essex Police and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner in taking forward this refreshed strategy."**

To access the new Rural Crime Strategy please click [HERE](#)

For further information please click on the following links:

**OPFFC**  
Essex Police  
Essex Rural Partnership





**Sound Reduction Systems Ltd** specialise in the manufacture and installation of decorative acoustic panels to solve reverberation and echo problems in village and community halls. Contact us to arrange a **FREE**, no obligation site survey, report and quote to solve the acoustic issues in your hall.



Alternatively, you can send us the details of your hall online using our simple 3 Step estimator form [www.soundreduction.co.uk/3se](http://www.soundreduction.co.uk/3se) and we will look to turn around any quote and report within 48 hours.



**Tel:** 01204 380074 **Email:** [info@soundreduction.co.uk](mailto:info@soundreduction.co.uk) **Web:** [www.soundreduction.co.uk](http://www.soundreduction.co.uk)

# NOISY HALL?

## GET 10% OFF ACOUSTIC PANELS & INSTALLATION

**10% DISCOUNT**  
on all orders  
UseCode **VILLHALL-10**

**WE OFFER FREE:**  
no obligation site visits,  
reports and quotes\* for  
all UK village halls.  
**\*Please allow 48 hours.**

**SEND YOUR DETAILS**  
Fill in the form via this link:  
[www.soundreduction.co.uk/3se](http://www.soundreduction.co.uk/3se)  
or email us at this address:  
[info@soundreduction.co.uk](mailto:info@soundreduction.co.uk)  
Please ensure you send us -

- Photos of the ceiling & walls
- Surface finish of the floor
- Height, width & Length



**OR CALL: 01204 380 074**



**“It is so important we get our young people engaged and interested in the countryside and aware of the important role played by farming in Essex today.”**

## Essex Schools Food & Farming Day is back!

The grounds of Writtle University College reverberated to cries of excitement from 3,000 children on 28th June as the Essex Schools Food & Farming Day took place in person for the first time since 2019.

A total of 60 Essex primary schools participated all of them bringing a hand-made scarecrow to display on the showground. The programme included a lot of hands-on activities with the children able to meet farm animals, see tractors and combine harvesters at work and get a taste of local home-grown food.

The event organised by the Essex Agricultural Society with support from Essex County Council and Writtle Agricultural College aims to give children an understanding of where their food comes from and to explain the work of farmers in Essex. Many farmers from across the county gave their time voluntarily to act as guides for the day.

RCCE is one of many Essex organisations and businesses that sponsor Essex Schools Food & Farming Day. Commenting after the event, Executive Director, Nick Shuttleworth said:

“I congratulate the Essex Agricultural Society and all who made the day possible. It is so important we get our young people engaged and interested in the countryside and aware of the important role played by farming in Essex today. The Schools Food & Farming Day is a wonderful way of doing this. It brings joy and fascination to the children something that is so evident when you walk around the showground. I am certain many of them will remember the day for a very long time to come.”

*Photos: Essex Agricultural Society*



## Local Insight Data Service

**RCCE now has access to Local Insights.**

RCCE has access to data for parishes, wards and districts across Essex and can provide bespoke reports which allow you to take an in-depth look at your community. Useful for parish councils, community groups, local authorities and neighbourhood planning groups.

The data is provided by an agreement between RCCE and OCSI – Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion. Local Insight uses the latest census data but any data that is outside of that is updated frequently to give more real time info.

Many parishes have previously found these reports useful for neighbourhood planning, applying for funding or understanding data connected to health, housing and much more. Most data available doesn't go down to parish level but RCCE has worked with OCSI to make that possible. There is a small charge for these reports, but we have tried to keep this to a minimum.

**For further information please contact RCCE.**  
**Email: [enquiries@essexrcc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@essexrcc.org.uk)**



**“We rely on people to tell us what their concerns are and to provide us with information.”**

If you see anything which you feel needs police attention, or you have information about a crime or criminal activity, always ring 999 if it is an emergency or a crime in progress.

Anyone who experiences or who has information about crime or anti-social behaviour, should ring 999 if it's an emergency or a crime in progress.

Otherwise you can report it online [here](#) where you can also provide information directly to an online Live Chat operator on weekdays (excluding bank holidays) between 10am and 9pm.

Alternatively, you can ring 101. You can also contact Crimestoppers [here](#), anonymously, online or by calling 0800 555 111.

# How RET are helping to keep our rural communities safe

## 12 months in the life of the county's Rural Engagement Team.

During the past 12 months, our rural engagement officers have secured some significant results, in and out of court.

Inspector Terry Jacobs says: "Our county is 72% rural and that is a lot of ground to cover. Some communities are extremely isolated and it is our job to reach them, keep in contact and help identify issues which matter to them.

Working with them, we can then tackle problems such as anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, poaching and farm thefts. But we rely on people to tell us what their concerns are and to provide us with information.

We can't always act on that information immediately, but we use it to build a picture and

what you give us might provide the final piece of the jigsaw we need to make an arrest or issue a summons to court."

To access the full report which covers the teams activity please click [here](#).

### Rural Engagement

The Rural Engagement Team provides specialist help and advice to tackle wildlife crimes, such as hare coursing, as well as heritage crimes affecting historic sites and buildings, thefts of agricultural machinery, large-scale organised fly-tipping and unauthorised encampments. They also liaise with partner agencies to take enforcement action against those who breach legislation and to tackle specific rural issues through proactive operations.

For specific crime prevention advice please visit the rural crime webpages [here](#). You can also find out about their farm and rural watch scheme [here](#).



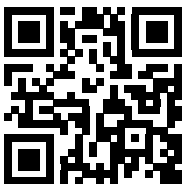


# CALLING ALL ESSEX HORSE RIDERS! CAN YOU HELP?

Horse Riders have the unique ability to see over hedges and go where patrol cars can't. Sign up to our Essex Horse Rider Volunteer scheme and become our extra eyes and ears.

Learn more about spotting the signs of heritage, rural, and wildlife crime, as well as how best to report to us.

FOR MORE INFO GO TO: [WWW.ESSEX.POLICE.UK/ESSEXWATCH](http://WWW.ESSEX.POLICE.UK/ESSEXWATCH)



**ESSEX  
POLICE**

Protecting and serving Essex

# RCCE CONTACTS

## RCCE CONTACTS

**Nick Shuttleworth**

Executive Director  
nick.shuttleworth@essexrcc.org.uk

**Sarah Sapsford**

Community Engagement & Services Manager  
sarah.sapsford@essexrcc.org.uk

**Gemma Humphries**

Finance Manager  
gemma.humphries@essexrcc.org.uk

**Laura Atkinson**

Rural Housing Enabler & Community Led Housing Advisor  
laura.atkinson@essexrcc.org.uk

**Sally Austin**

Community Agent Specialist Advisor  
sally.austin@caessex.org.uk

**Danielle Frost**

Village Halls and Community Buildings Adviser  
danielle.frost@essexrcc.org.uk

**Michelle Gardiner**

Community Engagement Officer  
michelle.gardiner@essexrcc.org.uk

**Neil Harper**

Rural Housing & Community Engagement Officer  
neil.harper@essexrcc.org.uk

**Lydia Howat**

Essex Wellbeing Service Locality Co-ordinator (Mid)  
lydia.howat@caessex.org.uk

**Nicki Percival**

Community Agent Coordinator (all Essex)  
nicki.percival@caessex.org.uk

**Elizabeth Rose**

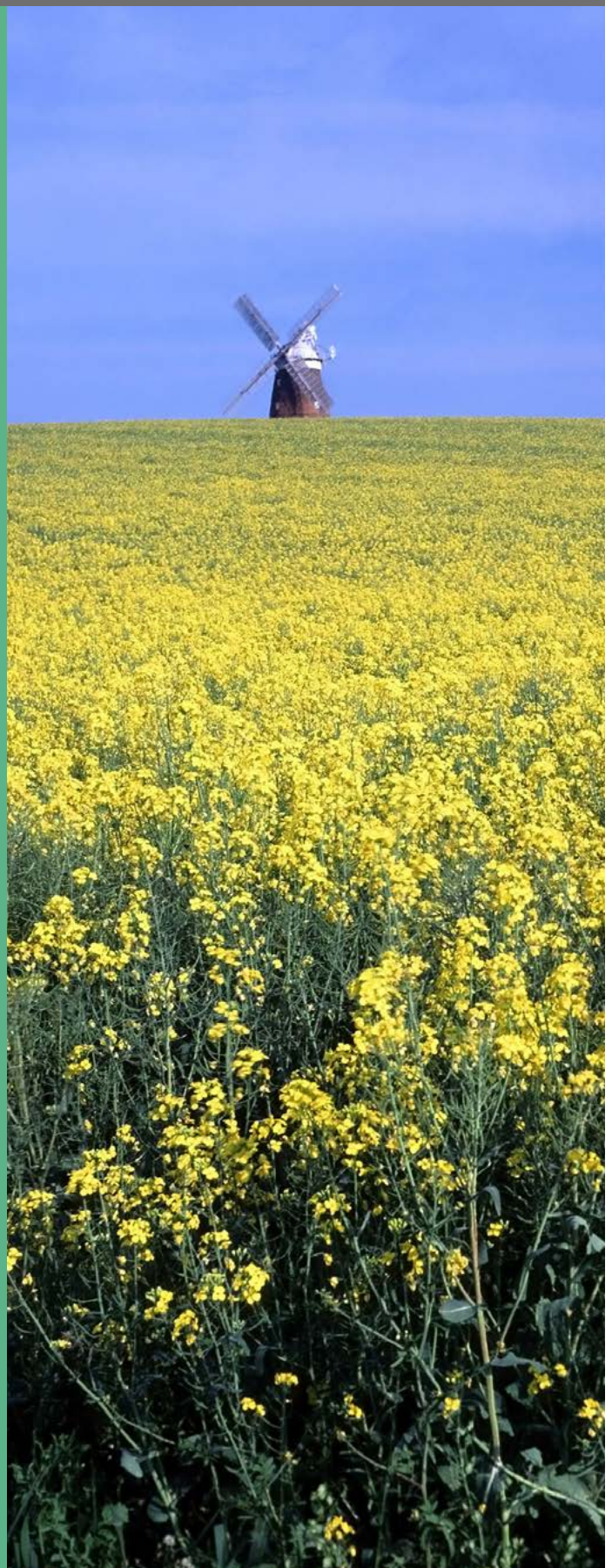
Partnerships and Promotions Officer  
elizabeth.rose@essexrcc.org.uk

**Laura Stacey**

Essex Wellbeing Service Locality Lead (Mid)  
laura.stacey@caessex.org.uk

**Jan Stobart**

Community Engagement Officer  
jan.stobart@essexrcc.org.uk





## COMMUNITY AGENTS

### RCCE

Helen Woodhall  
 Yvonne Weaver  
 Sandy Sadler  
 Christina Wood  
 Jennifer Mason  
 Ben Lacey  
 Tracy Rolph  
 Kim Vanderhoven-Smith  
 Chivonne Claydon  
 Sara Moutard  
 Nicki Carnaby  
 Kelly Coombs  
 Lola Oni  
 John Peart  
 Donna Reilly  
 Jodie Clay-Moran  
 Nicky Hoy  
 Sandra Burkin  
 Jackie Driscoll  
 Margaret Carter  
 Kusum Sharma  
 Charlotte Riley  
 Jan McKay  
 Marion Buffett  
 Nicky Duhig  
 Steven Wilkins  
 Dawn Bostock  
 Vicky Newbrook

**Telephone**  
**Email**

### District

Basildon  
 Basildon  
 Basildon  
 Castle Point  
 Castle Point  
 Brentwood  
 Braintree  
 Braintree  
 Braintree  
 Braintree/Uttlesford  
 Maldon/Colchester  
 Maldon  
 Chelmsford  
 Chelmsford  
 Chelmsford  
 Colchester  
 Colchester  
 Epping Forest  
 Epping Forest  
 Harlow  
 Harlow  
 Harlow/Uttlesford  
 Rochford  
 Rochford  
 Tendring  
 Tendring  
 Tendring  
 Tendring

**0300 3039988**  
**provide.essexwellbeing@nhs.net**

### United in Kind

Amy Melton - Service Coordinator  
 Ali Massey  
 Karis Galliano  
 Anna Wilson  
 Catherine Venables  
 Tracey Crook  
 Christine Chester  
 Corrina O'Donnell  
 H Goodwin  
 Jayne Laken  
 Amy Robelou  
 Kelly Coombs  
 Nick Robinson  
 Sarah Ayling  
 Rebecca Morton

### District

Basildon  
 Maldon  
 Castle Point  
 Tendring  
 Tendring  
 Uttlesford  
 Rochford  
 Colchester  
 Braintree  
 Brentwood  
 Chelmsford  
 Epping  
 Harlow  
 Essex Wellbeing Service  
 Volunteer Facilitator

To email a member of the team please [CLICK HERE](#)

### Find Your Active

Tracey Crook  
 Tracy Bliss  
 H Goodwin  
 Amy Melton  
 Carolyn Beal  
 Vacancy  
 Vacancy  
 Carol Wakeman  
 Vacancy  
 Mirka Marri

### District

Tendring  
 Castle Point  
 Colchester  
 Maldon  
 Rochford  
 Chelmsford  
 Basildon  
 Brentwood  
 Braintree  
 West Essex  
 (Epping, Harlow & Uttlesford)

To email a member of the team please [CLICK HERE](#)



“To provide local communities with the skills, resources and expertise necessary to achieve a thriving and sustainable future”

---

Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)  
Threshelfords Business Park  
Inworth Road  
Feering  
Essex CO5 9SE

T: 01376 574330  
E: [enquiries@essexrcc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@essexrcc.org.uk)  
[www.essexrcc.org.uk](http://www.essexrcc.org.uk)



Registered Charity No. 1097009  
Company Limited by Guarantee  
Registered No. 4609624