

### **Cultural organisations can bid for cultural funding**

Essex arts and cultural organisations can bid for strategic funding from Essex County Council's Cultural Strategic Fund 2017.

Grants of £2,500 and above are awarded annually to organisations and groups whose work has strategic cultural benefits for the Essex community and who can demonstrate that their work contributes to the strengthening of the cultural infrastructure of the county.

[The scheme is open for applications until 22 May.](#)

Hadleigh-based Open Arts were awarded £14,240 through the scheme in 2016 to support their work helping people improve and maintain their mental health through creative learning sessions with professional artists on visual arts, drama, music and film.

As a result of their work in the last three years, 85 per cent of Open Arts course participants who had previously been admitted to hospital were not readmitted.

Jo Keay, Open Arts Manager said: "The continuing support of Essex County Council has been a great benefit to the Open Arts project. The funding provided by the ECC Strategic Fund has contributed greatly to the running costs of the Open Arts studios as well as our art courses, which help to improve the lives of a wide range of people throughout Essex."

Harlow Art Trust received £13,350 to widen its work with the local community, young people and businesses, using their Strategic Grant to deliver expert workshops with residents, families, schools and young people on such diverse topics as sculpture, dance, printing, set design and film model making.

The Trust's sculpture collection includes works by world-renowned artists such as Auguste Rodin, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Lynn Chadwick, and Ralph Brown.

## **Find out if your road is set to be resurfaced this year**

The full roads resurfacing programme from April 2017 to March 2018 is now available to check on the [highways information map](#).

The map allows residents to see every road scheduled for an upgrade superimposed on a map. A colour code then shows what type of road surfacing will be used.

You can click on the works to find out more information, including date range or when the works are scheduled take place. Please be aware works are weather dependent and therefore dates for works can change.

Andrew Cook, Director for Highways and Transportation, said: “We have modernised our information for everyone about the road resurfacing programme for this year. You can now see on our website which roads are going to be completed and which type of treatment will be used.

“This is all part of our move to make highways information more easily available online. We often get calls from the public asking when their road is due to be resurfaced - this interactive map will help keep residents up-to-date with our upcoming road improvements at the click of a button.

“More precise dates will also be available on [roadworks.org](#) as we get nearer the time and we will continue to directly inform residents living close to the works so you can plan ahead.”

You can also find gritting routes, public rights of way, bus stop locations and much more on the highways information map.

Despite a cold snap creating more potholes over the Christmas and New Year period, the number of potholes on local routes is down from June last year (2016).

The number of potholes on local routes dropped from 4,954 in June last year to 4,733 at the end of March 2017.

You can now tell us about a highways issue quicker and easier thanks to our [newly improved website](#).

## **Independent survey shows boost in bus satisfaction levels in Essex**

Bus users are happier with the punctuality and journey times of services in Essex according to a new national survey.

The Bus Passenger Survey, conducted by independent watchdog Transport Focus, showed a substantial rise in customer satisfaction with Essex bus users.

- 86 percent of Essex passengers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall journey (up from 79 percent in 2015)
- 70 percent of Essex passengers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with bus punctuality (up from 64 percent in 2015)
- 85 percent of Essex passengers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with bus journey time (up from 82 percent in 2015)

The Bus Passenger Survey pulled in responses from 47,000 bus users across England and Scotland. In Essex, 793 bus passengers were surveyed between September and December last year (2016).

## **Schools competition to ‘love your clothes’**

Schools across the county have taken part in a competition to recycle old clothes and textiles.

Run by Recycle for Essex, the competition raised awareness of the importance of reusing and recycling textiles. 25 schools across the County took part, collecting nearly six tonnes of textiles for reuse and recycling, and raising over £2,000 for their schools.

It's easy to recycle your textiles across Essex with many districts and boroughs offering kerbside collections, all recycling centres accepting textiles, along with the many textile banks located all around the county. All clean clothing and textiles can be recycled, even items that are ripped or have holes in.

The Recycle for Essex team is also running a campaign to encourage residents to reuse unwanted, wearable clothes.

Unwanted clothes can be resold, rejuvenated, recycled or given to charity.

To find out more, visit [recycleforessex.com](http://recycleforessex.com) and [loveyourclothes.org.uk](http://loveyourclothes.org.uk).

## **Traditional Building Skills, Conservation Courses and Lectures Programme for 2017/18**

Place Services at Essex County Council is launching its 2017/18 programme for Traditional Building Skills, Conservation Courses and Lectures.

The courses are designed to enable conservation and building professionals, contractors, general builders, and the owners and managers of historic buildings and sites, to increase their knowledge and skills in the technical and practical issues involved in the conservation management and repair of historic buildings and the wider historic environment.

All of the courses and lectures are delivered by leading craftsmen and experts in their specialist fields and are open to a variety of levels of skill.

The lectures, which are recognised by the Institute of Historic Building and Conservation (IHBC), run from the magnificent Crossing Temple Barns near Braintree in Essex.

This year's programme includes a number of new subjects from investigating and remedying dampness and timber decay, to historic paintwork and the management of conservation areas.

Practical, 'hands on' courses are either workshop-based, or run from 'live' projects on historic buildings. Venues for practical courses this year will include Stock Windmill in Essex, Little Wenham Hall in Suffolk and the magnificent walled garden at Hatfield House in Hertfordshire.

Highlights of this year's programme include a special one-day conference on the Forests of Essex, to be held in memory of Oliver Rackham, who contributed so much to our understanding of forests and woods in Essex, which will explore the cultural and natural heritage of our wooded landscapes and their future management. Another highlight is a Hot Lime Workshop delivered by one of England's leading stonemasons.

Adrian Gascoyne, Head of Place Services, said: "It is vital that we don't lose these traditional building techniques as they are essential to preserving our rich heritage. The programme we run gives everyone from a homeowner of a listed building to a practising craftsman the opportunity to learn new skills and to preserve our heritage for future generations."

A number of free places are offered under a bursary scheme, which heritage developer City & Country are supporting for the ninth year running.

To find out more about eligibility and to apply for funding, call 0333 013 2738 or email [traditional.buildingskills@essex.gov.uk](mailto:traditional.buildingskills@essex.gov.uk). To view the range of courses and lectures offered by the programme, visit [placeservices.co.uk/courses](http://placeservices.co.uk/courses).

## **Borrowing an e-book set to become easier for customers**

Borrowing e-books from Essex libraries will be easier from next week as they will all be stored in one location.

From 1 April Borrowbox will be our sole e-book supplier and customers will no longer have access to Overdrive.

Titles currently on Overdrive will be transferred to Borrowbox, with borrowing limits increased so customers can still borrow the same number of titles as before.

Those with titles already on loan from Overdrive will be able to keep them until their renewal date.

The changes will make it easier for our customers to find what they're looking for as they will need just the one app and will find everything in one location.

And money saved on operating two separate contracts will be diverted to Borrowbox, with new titles added every month.

[Instructions for using Borrowbox](#) and downloading the app can be found on our libraries website.

## **Parents warned over toxic battery risk in toys**

Essex Trading Standards are warning parents of the dangers of unsafe toys after an investigation in the county uncovered retailers selling kids products with inadequate casing for batteries.

Ten toys were bought from discount stores and market stalls in Essex between November and January, three of which were found to have small batteries easily accessible to children. If button batteries are swallowed, not only do they pose a choking risk they can also release an alkali that can permanently damage a child's oesophagus.

All ten toys were tested for mechanical and physical risks. One - a toy car - also broke into small parts when dropped, posing a further choking hazard, and its packaging was a suffocation risk.

Following advice from Trading Standards, the business responsible for importing the toy car has had all remaining stock destroyed. Other businesses are liaising with Trading Standards and redesigning and relabelling toys to make them safe.

On 14 March Trading Standards Officers publicised the dangers of small batteries in toys to 300 Year 5 children from Uttlesford schools, at a careers fair hosted by Dunmow St Mary's primary school.