

Report by Cllr Derrick Louis, Essex County Council Member for Witham Southern

1. Guidance for online checking of Ownership of Highway Assets

If trying to check Highways Asset ownership, start with www.essexhighways.org website front page, scrolling down beyond the large orange box, to the 6 blue boxes.

1. In the bottom right one, click on "highways interactive map" which will open slowly with a large T's&C box in the middle - click the grey accept button, lower right, & the map opens up properly.

2. You can then scroll around, to move the map to your chosen area, or you can use the address search in a purple box on the left.

3. Once at a comfortable scale / viewpoint, find the "Map Categories", left of the map & click on the little white box, to the right of "Assets" the map will colour up with lots of dots & lines, most likely more than you will be looking for!

4. To remove what you are NOT looking for, scroll down the list of different assets on the left & untick the ones you don't want. For example, looking for PROWs - untick everything except "Public Rights of Way".

5. Looking for Highways ownership generically, you may wish to see more than one set of assets, so "Highway & Footway Network" & "Highway Record" is a good selection.

I find this part of the website very useful for most enquiries I receive, as a useful first port of call before putting significant effort into an answer to something that is actually the responsibility of another organisation.

2. A12 Bridge Delays due to Highways England Traffic Lights

I have been advised that the plan is to fit Vehicle Detection Sensors onto the lights to prevent "London Bound" side vehicles being held at red when there is no "Witham Bound" traffic. Having just driven across the Bridge, it would appear that these have now been fitted.

3. Hoe Mill Bridge

To support the width restriction at Hoe Mill Bridge two-way temporary traffic lights are required to help with traffic flow. The traffic management is checked regularly and Highways have recently been to site to assess the traffic lights following reports of the lights not working correctly.

They advised that the traffic lights are working correctly however, if a vehicle runs a red light the signals will go into safe mode and reset, which takes approximately 30 seconds. During safe mode both sets of lights will be red and any traffic should queue. If vehicles continue to run the red light during safe mode, the lights will reset again. Wide vehicles are required to follow the diversion route in place.

4. Serious accident on the corner of Maldon Road and Jenkins Lane

A serious accident was reported to me by a local resident at the site which has a history of accidents. I am working with the Traffic Working Party Chairman (John Cockell) to put a case to the Local Highways Panel for further improvements at this site along with getting a missing 30 MPH sign (Hatfield Peverel Bound) replaced.

5. New Member-Led Pothole Initiative

Essex Highways have launched a scheme, similar to before, where County Council Members can prioritise up to 50 potholes for repair.

The Information required for each pothole (**in Pothole Priority order**) is:

1. A simple description of each defect you are listing– see additional ‘Typical Carriageway Defects’ sheet for help
2. If possible, at least two good photos of each defect. It would be most helpful if one photo is a close-up of the defect, and the second one shows the position of the defect in the road, relative to adjacent properties and identifying landmarks. Please do not put yourself or others at risk when taking photographs.
3. Exact location of defect. Please be as accurate as possible – include road & village/town name but also, where possible, details of house number(s) or business(es) that the defect is adjacent to.
4. Please note any other useful information that you think might help us. For instance, if there are nearby ironworks (manhole covers, gratings etc) or critical road markings; if the road is narrow or parking is tight; and so on.
5. Please note if the defect is outside a ‘higher risk’ area – for instance if there is a children’s nursery, school, college or care home.

In order to meet the deadline for submission to Highways, The Parish Council has been requested to send me a consolidated return, in priority order, by **Friday 11th September 2020** – incomplete submissions or those received after this date will be held over to the scheme is hopefully run again.

6. A12 Widening

I attended the Highways England (HE) A12 Members' forum on Wednesday 19th August. The purpose of this forum was to provide an update on the A12 scheme, including work that has taken place to date. HE also (confidentially) discussed their plans for the preferred route which should be announced publicly, in the near future.

They also updated members on Concrete Highway, Life Extension Works (LEW) and Reconstruction Works (RECON) and the headline programme is below:

| Scheme name | Type of intervention | Scheme length (km) | Delivery Year |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| A12 Rivenhall J22-J23 (Coleman's to Kelvedon) | LEW | 2.2 | 2020/21 |
| A12 J23 - J24 (Kelvedon Bypass) | LEW | 3.6 | 2020/21 |
| A12 J27 (Spring Lane slips only) | LEW | 0.8 | 2020/21 |
| A12 Chelmsford J15-16 (Howes Farm to Galleywood) | LEW | 3.1 | 2020/21 |
| A12 Chelmsford J16-17 (Galleywood to Howe Green) | LEW | 4.0 | 2020/21 |
| A12 Chelmsford J17-J18 (Howe Green to Sandon) | LEW | 2.2 | 2020/21 |
| A12 Chelmsford J18-J19 (Sandon to Boreham) | LEW | 3.9 | 2020/21 |
| A12 Marks Tey Interchange | RECON | 1.1 | 2021/22 |
| A12 Stanway to Marks Tey | RECON | 2.3 | 2021/22 |
| A12 Margaretting Bypass | RECON | 4.0 | 2022/23 |
| A12 J20A-J21 (Hatfield Peverel to Lynfield Motors) | LEW | 0.3 | 2024/25 |
| M11 - A11 Ickleton northbound | LEW | 0.3 | 2020/21 |
| M11 - A11 Ickleton southbound | LEW | 0.3 | 2020/21 |
| A14 J52-J55 (Claydon to Copdock) | LEW | 6.5 | 2020/21 |
| A14 Haughley to Tothill | RECON | 3.6 | 2022/23 |
| A120 Ardleigh to Elmstead | Hybrid | 7.6 | 2023/24 |
| A120 Hare Green to Horsley Cross | RECON | 1.9 | 2023/24 |
| A14 J52-J53 Claydon to White House | LEW | 1.3 | 2023/24 |
| A14 J53-J54 White House to Sproughton | LEW | 2.7 | 2023/24 |
| A14 J54-J55 Sproughton to Copdock | LEW | 3.6 | 2023/24 |
| A120 Horsley Cross to Wix | RECON | 3.5 | 2024/25 |
| A120 Elmstead to Hare Green | LEW | 3.4 | 2024/25 |
| A14 J55-J56 Copdock to Wherstead | LEW | 3.5 | 2024/25 |
| A14 J56-J57 Wherstead to Nacton | LEW | 1.8 | 2024/25 |
| A14 J57-J58 Nacton to Levington | LEW | 2.0 | 2024/25 |
| A14 Orwell Lorry Park | LEW | 0.3 (on slip) 0.3 (off slip) | 2024/25 |
| A14 J58-J59 Levington to Trimley | LEW | 1.9 | 2024/25 |

7. Member Locality Fund

Essex County Council has made £10,000 available to each County Councillor for the benefit of their Division.

What the money can be spent on:

Money must be spent in a way which benefits the division. There are three main ways of spending it:

- making a grant to a registered charity, a parish council or a properly constituted community or voluntary association for the purposes of a specific service or project in the Division;
- buying goods or services; or
- commissioning services from ECC.

What the money cannot be spent on:

- an organisation in which the Councillor is involved, unless the Leader agrees otherwise and makes a formal decision to that effect;

- an organisation which is political or undertakes any political campaigning activity or on a councillor's constituency business;
- anything which has a significant ongoing maintenance or support liability which ECC would be required or expected to bear – unless there is a separate agreement to bear the cost with funding identified;
- anything which benefits a particular individual, business or 'for profit' organisation;
- any organisation which does not operate on an inclusive basis – services must be available to the community without discrimination (recognising that some services are only useful to certain groups);
- any organisation which has previously misused public money;
- anything which is unlawful

This was passed to the Parish Clerk on 19/8/20 with requests for initial ideas to be fed back to me by the end of August.

8. Planning White Paper

The Government released its Planning White Paper on 6 August 2020 for consultation under what Robert Jenrick, the housing secretary described as "once in a generation" reforms to sweep away an outdated planning system and boost building.

The White Paper emphasises the importance of the planning system and its central role in providing more homes; aiding economic recovery; improving design; combating climate change; improving biodiversity; and supporting sustainable growth. However, the proposals put forward are an overhaul of the planning system as we know it and are presented as 'A new vision for England's planning system'.

There will still be local plans, local planning authorities and a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) but significant changes are proposed to how plans are prepared, their content, community engagement, the examination process, the role and determination of planning permissions, and infrastructure contributions and levies to name a few. The changes will have significant resource implications for local authorities and in many respects the White Paper poses as many questions as it does answers and need careful consideration.

The consultation closes 29 October 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

9. New funding to support those in fuel poverty

New funding announced will see even more people in Essex who are at risk of fuel poverty, supported with paying their energy bills and keeping their homes warm this winter.

Essex County Council, alongside the Citizens Advice Service launched “Warm Homes Essex” earlier in the year. This initiative sees a team of specialist energy advisers operating across the county who work with clients identified as being in “fuel poverty” and help them to improve their financial and physical circumstances.

The £775,000 funding comes from the £150m Warm Homes Fund, established by National Grid and administered by Community Interest Company, Affordable Warmth Solution (AWS). The funding is designed to support local authorities, registered social landlords and other organisations working in partnership with them, to address some of the issues affecting fuel poor households.

For more information on eligibility, please contact the Warm Homes team on 0300 3033 789 or by submitting an enquiry through: www.warmhomesessex.org.uk

10. Local Government Reform

Leaders and Chief Executives of all councils, county, city, district, and unitary in Greater Essex, alongside the Police, Crime & Fire Commissioner, met recently to discuss the future of Local Government across the county.

The meeting took place following Government announcements around the future of Local Government. The Government has made clear its intentions for Local Government Reform with a White Paper due to be published in the autumn which will set out the criteria and process for how this will work.

11. Protecting Children Online

An Essex-wide campaign focusing on preventing the exploitation of children online was launched on Monday 24 August.

Online exploitation has been a growing concern for several years, with the internet and social media becoming so integral to daily lives. For children, the internet has become the new classroom and playground and this has been amplified during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Sadly, there are people there that take advantage of this. Internationally, there has been an increase in incidences and there is a prediction that there could be an increase in referrals locally when children have access to safe adults to confide in when back at school in September.

That is why the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB), alongside Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Children Partnerships, re-launched their Child Exploitation “Did You Know” Campaign, working with local authorities and organisations including The Children’s Society, Barnardo’s and The 2 Johns to raise awareness of the exploitation risks that an increased time on the internet can pose.

The campaign which run 24 – 30 August covered topics such as online gaming, youth produced sexual images and online bullying. It aimed to challenge the

perception that the victim is to blame; instead creating a supportive network around the child in which they feel able to speak openly about concerns they may have.

The campaign encouraged parents to take an active interest in their child's online world, give them the confidence to speak openly about the dangers, and the knowledge of what to do is something isn't right.

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board website has resources for professionals and those working with families to enable them to fully support children and parents.

www.escb.co.uk/onlineexploitation

12. Essex County Council Home to School Transport: Planning for September 2020 briefing note from the Cabinet Member for Education

Background

Educational settings in Essex will reopen in September and welcome back all children following closures caused by Covid-19. Essex County Council (ECC) is required to provide all [eligible pupils in Essex](#) with 'Home to School' (H2S) transport to a school or an educational setting (mainstream schools, special schools, and alternative education settings).

The [Department for Education \(DfE\) guidance](#) has set a new framework for supporting transport to and from schools from the autumn term 2020. The framework makes a distinction between dedicated school transport (covering Essex's Mainstream and [Special Educational Needs](#) settings) and the wider public transport, both used to transport eligible pupils to and from school:

- **Dedicated school transport** services are used only to carry pupils to school. This includes statutory home to school transport, but may also include some existing or new commercial travel routes, where they carry school pupils only.
- **Public transport** is a commercial service route, which can also be used by the general public.

Dedicated School Transport

The DfE guidance framework for dedicated school transport says that as these services do not mix with the general public and tend to be consistent, the requirement for social distancing on these journeys will **not** apply from the Autumn term. However, educational settings and transport operators should consider;

- Distancing within vehicles wherever possible, and how pupils are grouped together on transport. Where possible, this should reflect the bubbles that are adopted within school.
- Organised queuing and boarding where possible, and the use of hand sanitiser upon boarding and/or disembarking vehicles.
- Reasonable additional cleaning of vehicles.

- The mandatory use of face coverings for children over the age of 11 ([exceptions apply](#)).

Public Transport Services

Across Essex pupils normally make extensive use of the wider public transport systems especially [public buses](#). The DfE guidance framework for public transport says they expect public transport **will** continue Social Distancing in the Autumn term. Therefore, its use by pupils particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum. To facilitate the return of all pupils to school, it will be necessary to take steps to both depress the demand for public transport and to increase capacity within the system. This will need to happen at a national and local level.

Schools

ECC recognises that schools have a critical role to play in supporting collaboration between all parties - providers, local authorities, parents and pupils. ECC have worked with education settings to ask that they encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school if possible. Schools may want to consider using 'walking buses' (a supervised group of children being walked to, or from, school), or working with their local authority to promote safe [cycling routes](#). It is also recognised that for some families, driving pupils to an education setting will also be an option.

Parents, Guardians and Students

There is a three phased approach to getting information out to this audience;

- 1) Parents and guardians of eligible pupils in Essex received a letter in mid-August detailing Home to School transport arrangements for September 2020. Included with this letter was some brief practical guidance aimed specifically at the students.
- 2) In addition to the [standard H2S guidance](#), a brand new '[Getting to School](#)' [information page](#) has been launched on ECC's Stop.Swap.GO! website. Resources continue to be developed to support travel choices to educational settings, providing parents and guardians advice on the sustainable travel choices available to them.

The intention is for the Stop.Swap.GO! website to become the central source of information for Parents, Guardian and Students; therefore we will continue to direct people to this channel first wherever possible.

- 3) ECC has also made Home to School Transport advice/information available via the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pages](#) on ECC's Essex.gov.uk website and will continue to make use of all existing social media and local community engagement channels to disseminate information further.

Further information

- In the first instance, it is recommend that ECC's [Stop.Swap.GO! website](#) is checked to view the latest updates.

- It is also recommended that the local transport provider's website/social media is checked (or they are contacted) regarding the latest changes/issues eg. a vehicle may have been delayed due to unplanned roadworks.
- If people cannot find the information they require elsewhere, they can contact Essex County Council's Contact Centre: 0345 603 2200*.

**This number may be impacted during response/recovery from COVID19.
Latest Contact Centre information can be found [here](#).*

If any Cllr requires help or advice, please don't hesitate to contact me on 07967 830277 or cllr.Derrick.Louis@essex.gov.uk