



Essex Highways: Summary communications strategy

November 2021

Essex Highways: Summary communications strategy

This strategy describes the approach Essex Highways uses to inform, alert and engage highways users, the wider public and other key partners including County Members, local residents, supply chain partners and employees, as we develop, improve and maintain the Essex highways network. This strategy also supports the associated annual Highways Maintenance Incentive Fund submission from Essex County Council (ECC).

Essex Highways is the identity of the integrated teams and other partners responsible for Essex County Council's highways network and delivering services, improving and maintaining infrastructure across the county, using a prioritised, asset-led, whole-life approach.

The scope of this strategy covers communications key business as usual activities, new key projects & priorities and the communications outputs associated with continued improvement and service delivery.

Aims

The Essex Highways strategy seeks to achieve five main aims:

1. Support Essex County Council in delivery of [‘Everyone’s Essex’ – the council’s plan for levelling up the county](#) effective 2021-2025. There is a focus on four areas where outcomes really matter for the quality of life for all people in Essex. They are:
 - The Economy
 - The Environment
 - Children and Families
 - Promoting health, care and wellbeing for people of all ages

Embedded in the plan is a renewed commitment to addressing inequalities and levelling up life chances for residents.

2. Support and explain, with examples where appropriate, how Essex Highways is supporting a pivot to ‘Safer, Greener, Healthier’ transportation priorities and agenda.
3. Provide consultation opportunities on relevant highways-related issues, enabling people to provide feed-back on the highways service, and to demonstrate how this feedback is considered.
4. Provide helpful and relevant information to the public, using digital channels where possible, to support ECC’s digital strategy
5. Deliver communications in recognisable, credible, timely, cost-effective, efficient ways
6. Help to deliver wider ECC efficiencies, mainly by encouraging individuals and organisations to self-serve using internet-based information and tools, as well as providing them access to helpful information that minimises follow-up calls or other enquiries.

Specifically, we will:

- Provide understandable highways-related factual information to the public and other interested parties, including County Members first, where possible. This will include information on our operations, constraints, performance, schemes planned or in progress, and our successes, as well as how we use customer feed-back in our decision making
- Improve awareness of positive works/investments we are undertaking on behalf of Essex County Council. This will include promoting understanding about the benefits and reasons behind decisions, such as our asset condition strategy and its use to prioritise works
- Manage expectations and perceptions so people have a realistic view of what will be done
- Defend and enhance the reputations of Essex County Council and its highways partners, as expressed through the identity of 'Essex Highways'
- Act as the brand guardians of the Essex Highways visual identity
- Provide accessible communications across a range of media but with a bias towards attractive, user-friendly digital channels, supporting ECC's desire to channel-shift and provide more accessible information
- Help ECC meet their statutory responsibilities answering Highways related FOIs/EIRs and other enquiries within statutory deadlines
- Work with the ECC corporate communications team, who control overall ECC corporate messaging content, distribution, direct media relations and communications budgets
- Monitor the effectiveness of the communications strategy through an annual review process to sustain continuous improvement

