



Essex Rural Fund – Mersea Walk – 12th March 2011

Encouraged, supported and accompanied by the High Sheriff, Michael Hindmarch, and the Chairman of Essex County Council, Rodney Bass, RCCE's small team of walkers are planning a circuit of Mersea Island, and would be delighted if you were able to join us for all or part of the walk.

By doing this we are aiming to raise money for the Rural Fund, to raise awareness of it, and to recruit supporters for it. There are many ways that supporters can help, including regular (or occasional) financial support, by helping us to spread the word to possible donors, or by organising awareness-raising events of their own.

What the Fund is for

Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) is a charity that has been working with rural communities in Essex since 1929 and aims to create a better future for Essex villages. The Rural Fund was established by RCCE in 2008 to provide funding support specifically to community groups and charities working in rural areas of the county. Villages, whether through necessity or good will, have always done a lot for themselves. This tradition continues with amenities such as village halls and play schemes as well as numerous clubs and societies run almost entirely by volunteers. With the decreasing availability of public money and the generally short term nature of funding streams, our aim is to build a sizeable fund that will be available for Essex's rural communities in perpetuity. We know that even a small amount can go a long way and can be the difference between projects, services and facilities happening or not. There may be willing volunteers to run a mother and toddler group at the local village hall, but without some money to buy equipment they won't get off the ground; and a small grant to a new community shop to buy initial stock may be the difference between opening or not. These and many other necessary and sometimes essential community activities will be able to apply to the Fund, which is managed by the Essex Community Foundation.

Progress so far

Through an active programme of events, a small group of trustees, staff and friends have assisted in growing the Fund to over £72,000 as at 31 December 2010. We have been helped by the availability of the Grassroots programme, which has enabled donations (including gift aid where applicable) to be enhanced by 50%. A limited amount of further help from this source (which expires at the end of March 2011) is still available. We aim to make a start in grant making in 2011/12, but, inevitably, this will be very modest. We hope, with your help, to raise the value of the Fund to at least £1 million within the next two years, which will enable the Fund to start making meaningful grants.

How to give

We are happy to receive donations in any form, ranging from gifts of shares to annual standing orders, but we want to make giving as easy and painless as possible. The enclosed form gives details of how to give but I would like to draw your particular attention to the option of using the Rural Fund's webpage at <http://www.justgiving.com/Essex-Rural-Fund>. Where applicable we will claim the gift aid and the Grassroots top-up. Please encourage your friends to join you in what we hope will be an easy and painless way of raising money. It would be immensely helpful if you would return the enclosed form to tell us what you are doing. This would also help us if you intend to join us for lunch so that we can plan the catering accordingly. We will announce the result of this initiative on Essex Community Foundation's website – www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk.

About the Walk

The full circuit of the island is about 12 miles. We have devised a plan to enable supporters to join us for as much or as little of this as they have time or energy for. Our gathering point will be at Mayday's Farm (grid reference TM030151) and walkers will be transported from there at 9.30 am in a double decker bus to the start of the walk at a caravan site on the south of the island (grid reference TM036128). The morning walking party, who will proceed round the island in a clockwise direction, will expect to arrive back at the gathering point, which is only 200 yards from the sea wall, by 12.30 pm, where non-walking supporters are warmly invited to join us for our lunch break. A very basic picnic lunch will be provided – soup, buns and sausage rolls will give a rough idea. In case of bad weather, shelter is available at the farm, but no seating, so those who might wish to rest should bring necessary equipment and leave it in their cars. Afternoon walking will then take us on round the island to the start point, from where the bus will again transport us back to the cars at the gathering point, where our expected time of arrival is around 4.30 pm. Half day walkers would hopefully find it easy to join us either for the morning or the afternoon, and those wishing to walk less than that can either walk to meet us before lunch or walk a little with us after lunch.

The terrain is mostly flat, some on sea walls, but a lot of beach and some duckboards, so suitable footwear such as walking boots would be recommended.

We very much hope to see you on the day.