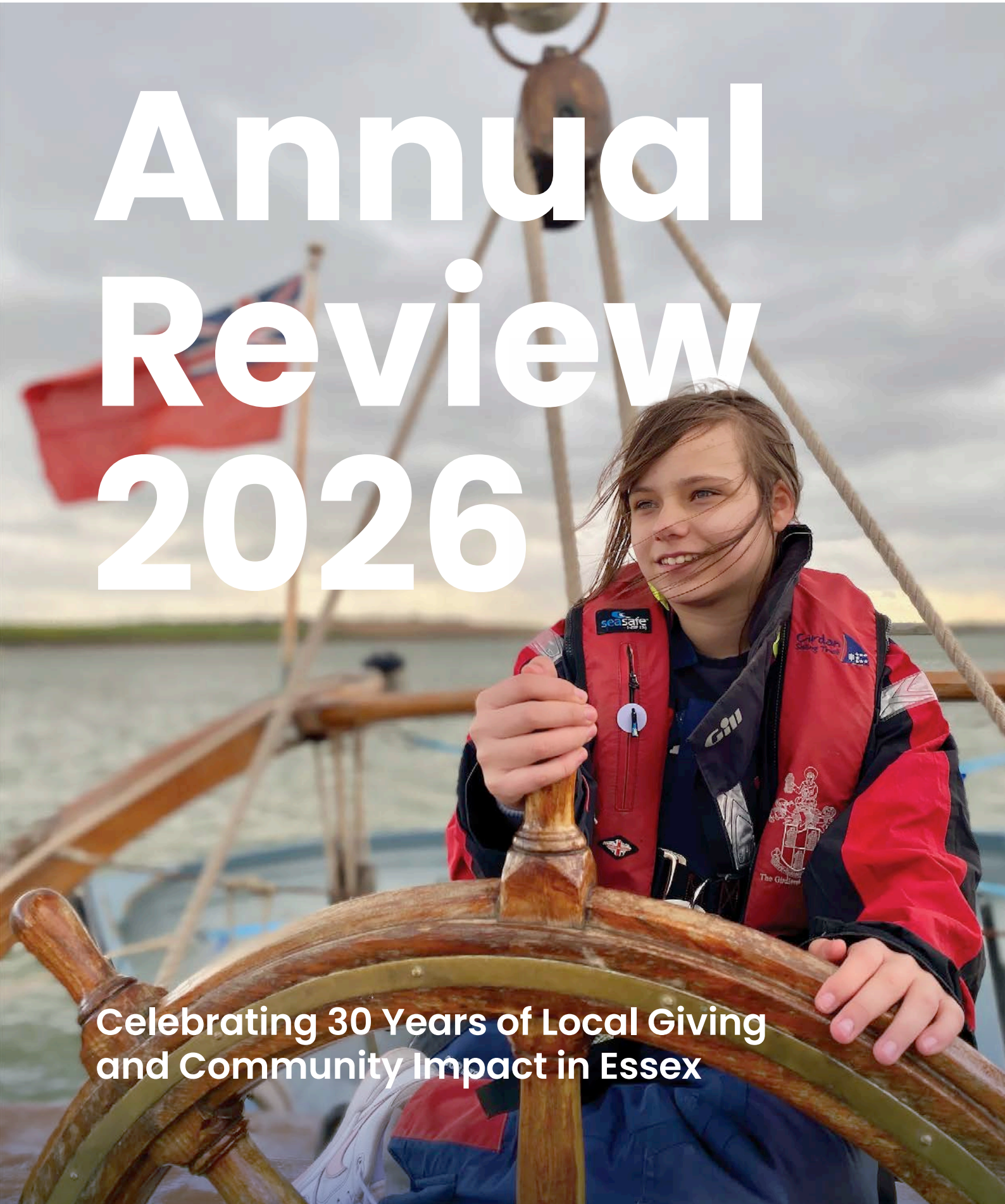
Essex Community Foundation

30 YEARS of generosity in Essex

Annual Review 2026



Celebrating 30 Years of Local Giving and Community Impact in Essex

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Front cover image: Cirdan Sailing Trust. Credit Graham Cross

Right: Ace Music Therapy CIC, winners of our #MyEssex Photo Competition.

Who we are

Essex Community Foundation (ECF) is an independent charitable trust set up in 1996 by a local family inspired by a vision to create a long-term financial resource to support voluntary organisations in their home county. Their ambition continues to guide us today.

30 YEARS
of generosity in Essex

Over three decades, we have expanded our work with individuals, families, businesses, charitable trusts and public agencies, introducing them to local groups tackling issues in our communities. By investing the donations we receive and the funds we manage, we provide a sustainable source of funding that local organisations can access year after year.

Voluntary and community organisations across Essex trust us because we value their work and take time to listen. Listening deepens our understanding of local communities, guides how we match donors' priorities with real need, and underpins the integrity with which we manage funds. Each year, around £4 million in grants reaches organisations across the county.





From our Chair

Atul Manek, Chair of Trustees

It is a great pleasure to introduce our 2026 Annual Review. In my first year as Chair of Trustees, I have had the opportunity to see first-hand the breadth of our work and the difference it makes across Essex as we celebrate our 30th anniversary.

At the heart of the Foundation is generosity. Over the past year, I have been struck by the commitment of the individuals, families, businesses and charitable trusts who choose to give through ECF. It is encouraging to see 17 new funds established this year, reflecting our continued ability to reach new people and inspire them to turn their generosity into support for local communities. We now manage 232 charitable funds, each reflecting a different commitment to support communities across Essex.

Our work with charities and community organisations remains as important as ever. This year, we awarded £3.5 million in grants, supporting 476 voluntary organisations and community groups and 226 individuals across Essex. We also awarded 27 multi-year grants totalling more than £386,000, giving organisations greater stability to plan for the future.

We have brought donors, funders, professional advisers, businesses and voluntary organisations together to share ideas and explore opportunities to work collaboratively. By listening to local organisations, we continue to build our understanding of the challenges facing the sector and identify where support is most needed.

Our 30th anniversary is a chance to reflect on how far we have come, while looking ahead to what comes next. Our Ambition for 2030 sets a clear direction: to increase our investment in local organisations, inspire more giving and build a lasting source of support for our communities. Our knowledge, relationships and independence will remain central to this work.

Today, our endowed funds have reached more than £60 million, strengthening our ability to support communities across Essex for generations to come.

I am proud to have taken on the role of Chair in our 30th year. It is an exciting time for the Foundation to step up and make a lasting impact. I would like to thank our donors, fundholders, charity partners, trustees, staff, volunteers and supporters for all that you have helped us achieve this year. I look forward to working with you all as we build on this progress and make the most of the opportunities ahead.



Our First 10 Years 1996-2006

10 Years: 1996-2006	
Endowment value	**£6,685,047**
Grants awarded	**£8,294,867**

2005

We move to our first dedicated office at 121 New London Road, Chelmsford.

2004

Fair Share Trust launches as a 10-year investment into Basildon and Tendring.

2003

Local Network Fund launches to support children and young people across Essex.

2002

£1.5m European Social Fund programme launched.

2001

We join Esmée Fairbairn's £1m 'Time for Growth' initiative to inspire local giving through Community Foundations.

2000

The Essex Millennium Fund began as a £1 million gift to the people of Essex.

1999

Total grants awarded reaches £250,000.

1998

Essex's first Social Needs Survey is commissioned with University of Essex.

1997

High Sheriffs' Fund established.

1996

We established Essex Community Foundation.

Where Our Story Began

The Marks family built Trebor into a successful confectionery business in Essex. When the company was sold to Cadbury Schweppes, Ian and Angela Marks began thinking about how that success could benefit the county they cared about. Rather than making one-off donations, their ambition was to give something back in a way that would continue to benefit Essex.

During a visit to the United States, they discovered the community foundation model and saw how it could bring local generosity together with local need. In 1996, they established Essex Community Foundation with a gift of **£1 million**.



Ian and Angela Marks.

Ian and Angela created more than a fund. They believed local people could shape the future of their communities.

We put this belief into action, awarding £69,150 to 24 voluntary organisations in our first year and beginning to build a deeper understanding of communities across Essex through our first Social Needs Report in 1998.



A proud moment at our 2001 AGM, celebrating the milestone of awarding more than £1 million in grants to support local communities. Twenty-five years later, that impact has grown to more than £66 million in grants awarded, helping Essex communities thrive.

That early belief in local organisations has continued. For example, we have supported CYP-Yellow Door since 1997, when it was still a small youth project run by six volunteers. Today, it supports more than 200 young people every week. Its journey reflects the importance of long-term relationships between funders and charities, built around trust, local knowledge and a shared desire to make a difference.

As more people gave through ECF, charitable funds were established and our network grew.

Thirty years on, the community foundation model Ian and Angela brought to Essex continues to connect local generosity with local need. Their vision has endured through the decades, creating a lasting way for people to support the communities they care about.



CYP-Yellow Door Young Volunteers 2026 bake sale.

"As we celebrate ECF's 30th anniversary, we are grateful for their support since 1997. Their belief in local communities and commitment to grassroots organisations has helped CYP-Yellow Door grow, adapt and continue supporting young people for nearly three decades. Quite simply, without ECF's support, we may not be here today."

Alex Hawkins, CEO, CYP-Yellow Door

The High Sheriffs' Fund

The High Sheriffs' Fund was established with ECF in 1997 by Robert Erith, when he was High Sheriff and one of our Founding Trustees. Robert wanted to create a lasting source of support for initiatives that would help communities thrive and feel safer.

Since then, successive High Sheriffs have built on this legacy during their year of office, raising funds to support charities and voluntary organisations working to prevent crime and tackle anti-social behaviour. Through the annual High Sheriffs' Awards, they recognise the contribution of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to community safety and award funding to support their work.


ESSEX against CRIME NEWSLETTER

No. 5 WINTER 1997

Have you an Award-winning idea?

Above: The Essex Against Crime newsletter announces the launch of the High Sheriff Awards in 1997, with Robert Erith, founding High Sheriff of the High Sheriffs' Fund (second in from the left), pictured alongside members of Essex Police.

Our Second Decade 2006–2016

10 Years: 2006–2016	
Endowment value	**£31,984,260**
Grants awarded	**£28,052,551**

2015

Our endowment exceeds £30 million.

2014

We publish our first Essex Vital Signs report.

The Essex Police Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) Matched Funding Scheme launches.

2013

We celebrate awarding more than £20 million in grants.

2012

Community First Endowment Match Funding scheme launches.

2011

We join the national Surviving Winter Appeal to support vulnerable older people in Essex.

2010

Awarded a total of £15 million in grant funding.

2009

Thriving Third Sector Fund is established following a £2 million gift.

2008

We are selected to deliver the Government's £7 million Grassroots Grants and Endowment Challenge.

2007

10 years of investing in community safety through the High Sheriffs' Fund.

2006

We celebrate 10 years and receive the Charity Commission Quality Mark.

Vital Signs

Between 2013 and 2015, we produced three Vital Signs reports to build a clearer understanding of the needs, strengths and differences across Essex. The reports brought together local data with the views and experiences of people living in the county, creating a fuller picture of life in different communities and highlighting where support and action were needed most.



The three reports looked at the wider picture of life in Essex, skills and education, and rural communities, helping ECF listen to local people, understand where needs were greatest and use that knowledge to inform grantmaking. They also highlighted the important local contribution of the VCSE sector and created opportunities for wider conversations about the issues facing communities and how people could work together to respond.

"Congratulations on 30 years of ECF. Not only have they built an endowment to be proud of, but more than that, their knowledge of the needs of Essex's voluntary sector is second to none."

Rupert Marks
Fundholder and nephew of Ian and Angela Marks



Left: Our 20th Anniversary Tea Party: Jonathan Minter FRCGP DL, ECF Chair at the time and now Vice President (left), with our founders Angela and Ian Marks (centre), and Caroline Taylor, our Chief Executive Officer (right).




Appeal helps the most vulnerable through winter

Top: Celebrating Chelmsford Star Co-op's £20,355 donation in 2021 to the Essex Coronavirus Response and Recovery Programme.

Above: Essex Chronicle feature the Surviving Winter Appeal 2019.

The Police Property Act Fund

Launched in 2014 in partnership with Essex Police, the POCA (Proceeds of Crime Act) Matched Funding Scheme uses funds recovered from criminal assets to match donations to eligible community safety funds by up to 50%.

To date, the scheme has generated £825,125 in match funding, helping to grow community safety funds and expand support for local projects, charities and community organisations working to improve community safety across Essex.



Celebrating the Launch of the POCA (Essex Police Proceeds of Crime Act Fund) and Match Funding Scheme with Essex Police in 2014.

"Knowing that the Fund can grow further through the POCA matched funding scheme makes giving even more rewarding. It's an extra incentive to contribute every year, knowing that my donation can help build the Fund and enable it to support even more local projects."

Sandra Hollis
Fundholder of the Hollis Family Fund.

ECF Today 2016–2026

10 Years: 2016-2026	
Endowment value	**£60,223,972**
Grants awarded	**£66,032,289**

2026

A 'Joint Vision for Civil Society in Greater Essex' launches and we celebrate our 30th Anniversary.

2025

More than 200 charitable funds under management.

2024

Our Ambition for 2030 launches.

2023

Fundbuilder launches, opening philanthropy to more donors.

2022

Our offices move to 3 Hoffmanns Way and opens the Foundation Hub.

2021

Invested funds reach £50 million.

2020

We launch the Essex Coronavirus Response and Recovery Programme.

2019

150 funds under management.

2018

Acorn Fund reaches £1 million in endowed value.

2017

We receive our largest legacy gift to date: £3.4 million from The William and Gladys Pudney Memorial Fund.

2016

We celebrate our 20th Anniversary.

Supporting Essex through Covid-19

When the Covid-19 pandemic reached Essex in 2020, charities and community groups faced unprecedented demand for their services while many saw their income fall. We responded by launching the Essex Coronavirus Response and Recovery Programme, bringing together support from fundholders, businesses, national funders and local donors. Between March and June 2020, more than £1.6 million was distributed to local organisations, while £855,885 reached Essex through the National Emergencies Trust appeal. During the year, we have awarded £4.8 million in grants, supporting 436 organisations and 97 individuals across the county. The programme demonstrated the power of local philanthropy in responding quickly to community need.


Over £1 million help for groups now providing a lifeline for the community

CHARITABLE TRUST'S CHIEF PAYS TRIBUTE TO GENEROSITY IN THE COUNTY DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

Essex Chronicle Feature - Over £1 Million secured Essex Coronavirus Response and Recovery Programme.

"As ECF celebrates 30 years, I feel very fortunate to have been involved in so much of its journey. It is extraordinary to think how much the Foundation has grown, how many more people and organisations it now reaches, and how much has been achieved across Essex. What particularly resonates is the fact that the spirit that drew me to ECF in the first place is still there – generosity, people coming together and wanting to make a difference in their communities."

Jonathan Minter FRCGP DL
Trustee 2010–18; Chairman 2013–18



Left: Winners of our 30th Anniversary Golf Day, Ellisons, who chose to donate their £500 winning prize donation to Comfort Cases UK to help provide essential items for children entering foster care in Essex.

Right: Members of Essex Youth Orchestra play at our 30th Anniversary Summer Party in 2025.





Amelia & Annabel from Ace Music Therapy CIC. Their winning entry can be found on page 2.

To mark our 30th anniversary, we launched the **#MyEssex photo competition**, inviting people across the county to share what makes Essex special to them. The winning photograph, submitted by **Ace Music Therapy CIC**, captured families coming together at its Wiggles & Jiggles music and movement group in Chelmsford. The **£500 prize** will support the programme, which helps babies and their parents and carers connect, build confidence and feel supported.

The Foundation Hub: a gift that keeps on giving

Philanthropic giving can take many forms. For example, when we needed a new home, a local family made an extraordinary gift: a building that could support not only the Foundation, but charities and community organisations across Essex. Opened in 2022, the Foundation Hub provides free workspace, meeting rooms and facilities, helping organisations meet, plan, train and collaborate without the cost of hiring space elsewhere. What began as a gift to ECF has become a shared resource for the wider voluntary sector, enabling organisations to direct more of their funding towards the communities they serve. Since opening, the Foundation Hub has supported 75 organisations, 180 registered users and more than 2,300 bookings, equating to 12,695 hours and 1,814 days of use.



Open Road Recovery using the Foundation Hub Shirley meeting room.



The ECF team at the High Sheriff Awards 2026.

A look at our 30th year

30 YEARS of generosity in Essex

Our 30th year has given us a chance to reflect on how far Essex Community Foundation has come and to look ahead to what comes next. 30 years ago, a small group of people, inspired by Ian and Angela Marks, had a big idea: that bringing generosity and local knowledge together could change lives across our county. Today, that idea has grown into a Foundation supporting charities and communities across Essex.

To all our supporters, I want to say a heartfelt thank you. Your generosity, trust and belief in ECF have helped shape our story over the past 30 years and made it possible for us to support communities across Essex. Together, you have helped turn an idea into a Foundation that brings people together through a shared belief in the power of local generosity. We are incredibly grateful for all you have helped us achieve, and for the part you will continue to play in what comes next.

Our Ambition for 2030 reflects that same commitment. We continue to invest in local organisations doing vital work in their communities, while helping more people to give in ways that can make a lasting difference. We are growing the funds that will support communities for years to come, and building on what we know about the needs of Essex to make sure our resources are used where they can have the greatest impact.

This year has shown why all of this matters. Demand for support is growing, charities are facing increasing pressures and Essex itself is changing. We want to keep listening, keep bringing people together and keep finding ways to use our resources and influence to support strong, connected communities. As we move beyond our 30th year, we have more to do, and we are looking forward to doing it together.

C Taylor.

"You have not only made us who we are today but you are our future."

This year's highlights

£3.7 million paid out in grants

476 voluntary organisations and **226** individuals supported

Total Income of **£7.4 million**, including **£3.9 million** into endowment

17 new funds established in the year

Total value of endowed funds under management **£60.4 million**

Number of charitable funds managed **232**

Charities use our Foundation Hub for a total of **2,386 hours**

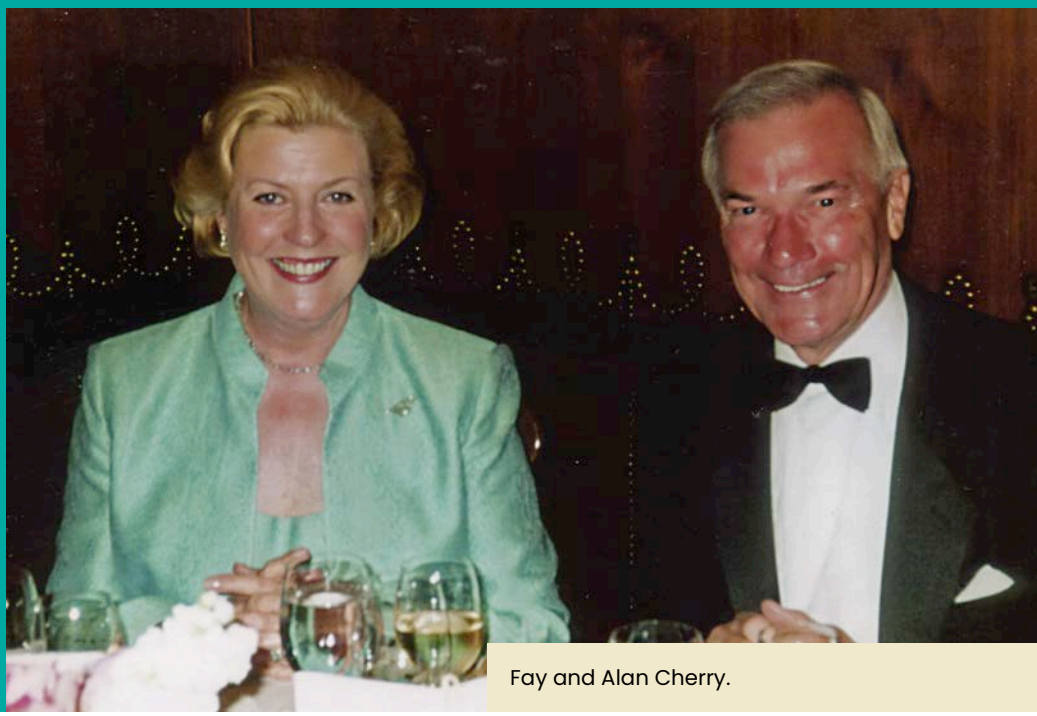


Caroline Taylor, Chief Executive Officer.

Generosity: Existing and long-term funders

For 30 years, the generosity of our fundholders and donors has helped us support people and communities across Essex.

We can only highlight a few funds however we are deeply grateful to everyone who chooses to give through us and trusts us to make a difference where it is needed most. This generosity takes many forms, from long-standing funds and legacy gifts to new funds established this year, helping local organisations strengthen communities across Essex.



Fay and Alan Cherry.

Alan and Fay Cherry Fund

Alan and Fay Cherry's commitment to their local community continues through their Fund. Alan was a strong supporter of our work and an advocate for the Community Foundation model. Following Alan's death, Fay has continued to work with us to award grants from their Fund, carrying forward their shared commitment to local communities.

Alan had a particular interest in education and the environment, and their Fund supports conservation, rural community issues and education. This year, they supported Raw Learning CIC in Rochford, helping strengthen its capacity to provide flexible, inclusive outdoor learning for children and young people outside traditional schooling. Based in a forest environment, Raw Learning supports neurodivergent learners and their families to build confidence, independence, wellbeing and practical life skills.

Bengtsen Family Fund

Frank and Fiona Bengtsen have lived in Essex for over 40 years and established their family Fund with us in 2019. They had already supported many charity events but wanted to extend their giving to local charities making a difference. Frank had taken part in our golf charity days and was impressed by the range of organisations we support.

This year, their Fund supported Lauriston Farm's Social Farming Bursary in Maldon, helping people with learning disabilities access inclusive, therapeutic and structured activities. The bursary helps meet essential costs including staff, equipment and insurance, keeping these opportunities open to people who might otherwise face financial barriers.



Frank and Fiona Bengtsen.

Alastair and Patricia Stewart Charitable Fund

Alastair and Patricia Stewart have been part of Essex life for more than 70 years. They set up their Fund in 2007 because they trusted us to know which local charities needed support, now and into the future. Following Alastair's death in 2022, Patricia has continued their commitment through the Fund.

This year, it supported Saint Cedd's Church PCC in Southend, helping renew its Community Worker's contract and maintain a daily support facility for children with special educational needs and their families. Activities include sensory stories, singing, messy play, therapies, counselling, occupational therapy, sport and exercise, and support for families who are home schooling.



Alastair and Patricia Stewart.



Bar 'n' Bus supports young people aged 10 to 19 in Basildon by providing a trusted and welcoming presence through community-based youth work, mobile outreach, mentoring, and guidance.

Acorn Fund

Our Acorn Fund has been part of ECF since we began, helping us grow as a Foundation and support our charitable work across Essex. Managed by our trustees, it gives us the flexibility to award grants to local charities and community groups, while also investing in the future of ECF so we can continue to support our communities for years to come.

The Acorn Fund gives everyone the opportunity to play a part in supporting local causes, with no minimum donation or fixed timescale. Every gift, whatever its size, helps the Fund grow and generate income for grants year after year. Thanks to the generosity of many donors, the Acorn Fund has awarded nearly **£1.5 million** since 1996, showing how, together, we can turn small acts of generosity into lasting support for communities across Essex.

Make a donation here.

Generosity: Legacy giving

A lasting legacy can take many forms. It might be a gift left in a Will, a fund created in memory of someone, or a way of continuing to support the causes that have mattered throughout a lifetime. Whatever form it takes, legacy giving can help ensure that generosity continues to support people and communities for generations to come.

Making a difference for Isaiah

A grant from the John and Amy English Charitable Fund has provided vital support for Isaiah, a young boy living with dystonia and spasticity. Funding has helped cover his therapy sessions, supporting his movement, communication and physical wellbeing, as well as a specialist car seat to give Isaiah greater comfort when travelling to therapy and help make journeys easier.



Isaiah trying his new car seat.

"You really have made a huge difference to our lives."

Chauntae, Isaiah's mum

Supporting ambition in sport

Sunny Mayo, who trains at national level in both Olympic weightlifting and powerlifting, received funding from the Rob George Foundation this year to support his training and competitions.

Rob's dad, Philip, explains the aims Rob set for the Foundation:

"Rob was quite clear that, as well as benefitting young people suffering from life-threatening or terminal illnesses, the Fund should also support young people with aspirations in sport or the performing arts who are held back financially from achieving their goals. Rob would be thrilled that both these objectives continue to be given equal weight and importance."

Philip, Rob George's dad



Sunny Mayo.

"Olympic Weightlifting and Powerlifting is something I am extremely passionate about and having some financial support has helped me continue training and work towards my goals."

Sunny Mayo



Dr Geoffrey Sneed.

Dr Geoffrey Sneed's legacy

Last year we launched the Dr Geoffrey Sneed Engineering Scholarship, creating a new opportunity for academically talented students across Essex who face financial barriers to higher education. The scholarship provides financial support towards university living costs, helping students focus on their studies and pursue careers in engineering and related fields.

Established through Geoffrey's estate, the scholarship continues his commitment to education, science and engineering. An engineer, inventor and educator, Geoffrey was passionate about inspiring young people.

In its first year, five students were awarded scholarships, helping them take their next steps towards higher education and future careers in engineering.



Bhramav Rajesh who was awarded a grant of £8k over 2 years towards the costs of his degree in at Cambridge University.

Leaving a legacy

A gift in your Will can be a meaningful way to support the causes you care about. We can help you understand the different options available and answer any questions you may have about leaving a gift to support communities across Essex.

To find out more about leaving a legacy, including gifts in Wills and the support available, scan the QR code below.

"Every legacy is personal, and every gift tells a story. Making a Will gives people the opportunity to reflect on what matters most to them and how they can ensure their generosity continues to make a difference long into the future."

Perry Norton,
Head of Development, ECF

Generosity: New funds and new funders

Each year we are delighted to welcome a new group of fundholders who have chosen to give through ECF. Their funds reflect a wide range of interests and priorities, but share a common commitment to supporting people and communities across Essex.



New fundholder Richard Bailey, has long held a keen interest in sailing and the issues affecting Essex's coastline. Through the fund, he hopes to support these interests, alongside a range of other charitable causes, for years to come.



Ann Johnson Educational Foundation

The Ann Johnson Educational Foundation has supported education in Chelmsford for more than 300 years. Its roots go back to the city's original Charity School, first established in 1713, and a later endowment created by Ann Johnson in 1775 to help young people move from education into employment and apprenticeships. Following a transfer to us in January 2026, her legacy of widening educational opportunity continues for future generations.

Bailey Family Community Fund

Contributing to the local and wider community has always been part of the Bailey family's ethos. With connections to ECF for many years, Richard decided to establish a Fund with us to continue that commitment, particularly as the family is now spread across the globe.

With a deep personal interest in sailing and community projects, Richard wanted to create something that could continue to give back locally. He has a long-standing interest in Essex's coastal issues, and the Fund will support these and other charitable causes in the future.

Bead Fund

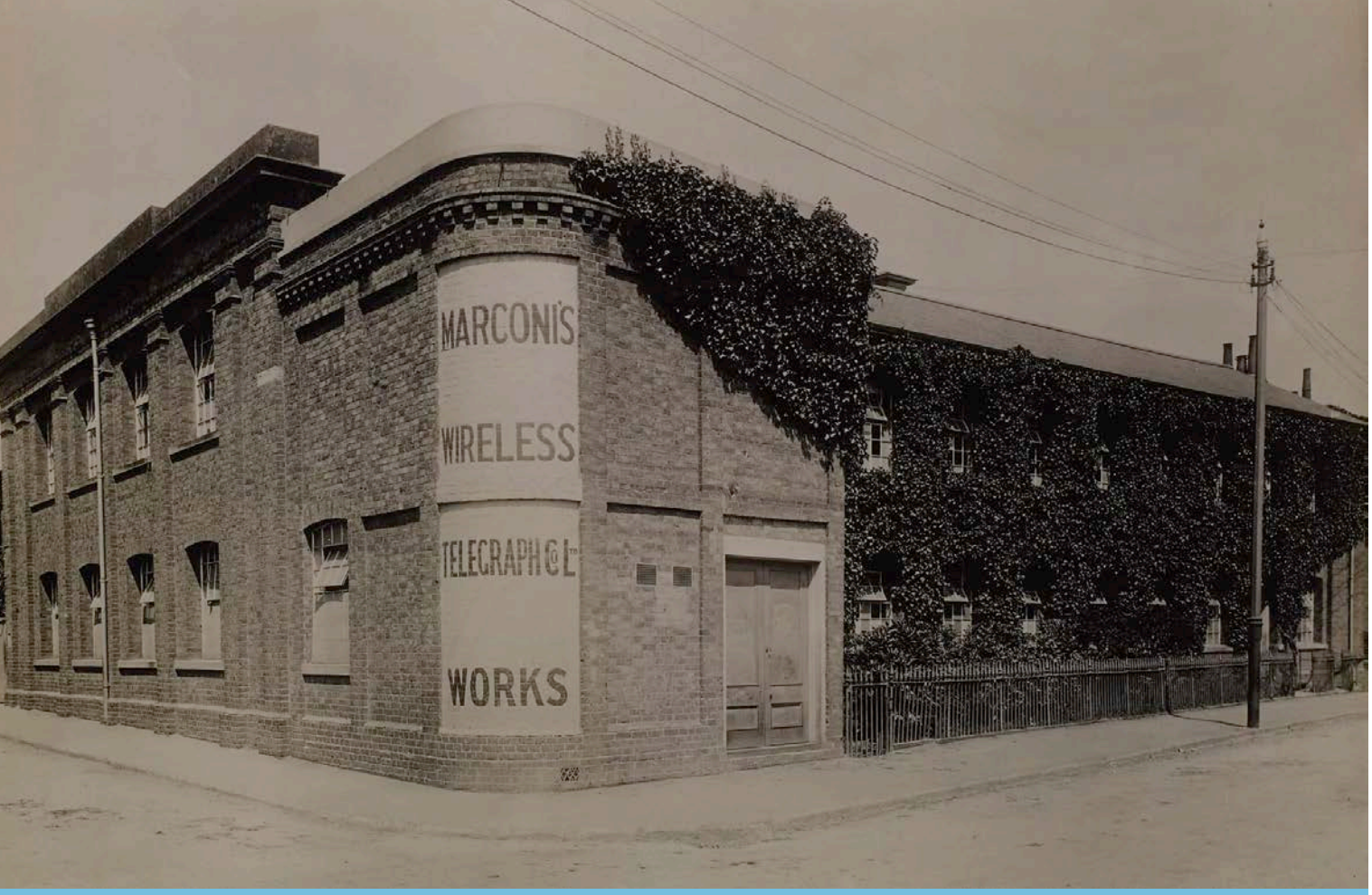
The Bead Fund is a legacy Fund that has been established with the proceeds of the sale of two Basildon based companies. The Fund will provide grants to charities who support people in the Basildon District. Following the sale of the businesses the donors wanted to ensure that funding was made available to the local communities for the long term.

Chigwell United Charities

This year, we began working with Chigwell United Charities to distribute available funding to organisations supporting people experiencing poverty in Chigwell and the surrounding areas.

Frost Family Fund

The Frost Family Fund was established by a couple who have worked in Colchester all their lives and wanted to start their giving during their lifetime. The Fund supports local charities and organisations across wider Essex, giving them the opportunity to see the difference their giving makes.



The first Marconi factory in Hall Street Chelmsford. Source: Essex Records Office.

Marconi Companies Charitable Fund

We are now managing the historic Marconi Companies Charitable Fund, following the approval of the transfer of the trust. We are pleased to continue the charitable legacy and ensure it supports the people of Essex in the long-term. The original trust was founded in Chelmsford in the early 1900s as a benevolent Fund for Marconi employees and their families. Chelmsford was central to Marconi's pioneering work in wireless radio technology, with his first wireless factory in Hall Street helping establish the town as a centre of innovation and employing hundreds of local people. Following the transfer of the trust , we were able to update its charitable objectives to ensure that the funds monies continue to be distributed effectively. Today, it supports a wider range of projects, with a particular focus on helping people facing hardship and difficult circumstances.

Humbletoft Fund

The Humbletoft Fund was set up by Anthony Gold to support charities and voluntary organisations benefiting people in Uttlesford.



Anthony Gold.

Trust Transfers

We are working with more long-established charitable trusts through trust transfers, taking on the management of their funds when it becomes more difficult for trustees to manage the grantmaking themselves. This helps ensure their funding continues to reach local charities and communities, while staying true to the original charitable purpose.

Indaver Rivenhall Community Fund

The Indaver Rivenhall Community Fund supports charitable organisations and projects in Kelvedon, Feering, Rivenhall, Silver End, Coggeshall and Bradwell, in the Braintree district.

Tippett Fund

Faith Tippett, whose remarkable life was filled with travel, learning, and adventure as well as a deep dedication to her family, community, and the causes she cared about. Faith's family chose to establish a Fund in her memory, to support charitable work across Essex with a particular focus on organisations supporting women, children and families in Colchester and Tendring.

The Wilkin Fund

The Wilkin family's long tradition of giving back to the community continues through The Wilkin Fund. This Fund was established to support charities across Essex, with a particular focus on projects connected to food, sustainability and the environment.

Based in Tiptree, Wilkin and Sons has been part of the local community for generations. The company's philanthropic roots go back to the early 1900s, when an Old Age Relief Fund supported people in need in the local area. The family has continued to support local sports, arts, community and environmental projects over the years, including through the annual Tiptree Strawberry Race.



Faith Tippet pictured in a Spitfire plane.

Tiptree

The new Fund builds on this long history of community support, helping Wilkin and Sons extend its giving to charities and projects across Essex and create a lasting source of support for causes close to the family's heart.

FUNDBUILDER
Grow your own charitble fund

Fundbuilder

Since launching in 2022, our Fundbuilder programme has helped individuals, families and businesses begin their philanthropic journey in a way that works for them. By contributing at a pace that suits them, donors can gradually build their charitable Fund and create a meaningful legacy, supporting the local causes and communities they care about most.

While the funds are growing, donations from all Fundbuilder donors are pooled into a collective fund. We award grants annually from this fund, enabling donors to see their contributions making an immediate impact while their individual funds continue to grow for future long-term giving. Once individual donations reach £25,000, these can be moved to set up a standalone Fund if the donor wishes.

Impact

Across Essex, people are facing a wide range of challenges, from loneliness and mental health to caring responsibilities and financial pressures. Local organisations are often best placed to understand these needs and respond with practical, trusted support.
Through our grantmaking, we help these organisations continue their work and reach more people across the county. The examples that follow show the breadth of this work and how, together, these individual stories contribute to a wider picture of stronger, more connected communities.



A young carer taking part in a Kool Carers respite activity session.

Kool Carers

Kool Carers supports young carers aged 8 to 18 and their families across Basildon and Brentwood, providing counselling, mentoring, practical support, education and respite. Our funding helped its Family Support Worker provide early support to families on the verge of crisis and gave young carers opportunities to take a break from their caring responsibilities.

Kool Carers has supported a young adult carer who helps care for her sister, a cancer survivor, through counselling, advocacy, respite activities and education support. She has become more confident, learned to manage her emotions and is now looking towards her future with greater positivity and determination.

"Kool Carers has saved my life on more than one occasion."

Sabrina, parent

HBBS - Havering and Brentwood Bereavement Service

For a young person grieving the death of someone close, having somewhere safe to talk can make a real difference. Our support enabled HBBS Counselling to provide 67 counselling sessions for ten young people aged 12 to 17. All ten reported positive changes in their relationships and ability to cope with everyday life, feeling less overwhelmed and more confident about facing everyday challenges.



Millrace Foundation Trustees visiting the workshop.

Millrace Foundation

The Millrace Foundation's furniture restoration workshop is a safe place for people to build confidence, independence and improve their mental health. When the charity was at risk of becoming insolvent, we helped secure funding so beneficiaries could continue their training.

"I found Millrace at a time when I needed it most, now I work to ensure that others can find it when they need it too."

Georgina Amory,
Volunteer Social Media Manager, Millrace Foundation



The Age Well East team at the Colchester Fun Day in Castle Park, where their "Name the Capybara" competition proved a big hit with visitors.

Age Well East

Age Well East's friendship group at Quaker House in Colchester has welcomed around 372 attendances since launching in October 2025. The group gives people a regular place to meet, make friends and have something to look forward to.

"I used to be very depressed before joining the Colchester Friendship Group, but since then it has opened up a whole new world for me."

Accuro

Accuro provides activities for children, young people and adults with disabilities across West Essex, helping people build friendships and feel connected to their community while giving families and carers time to recharge. Our funding support helped continue its clubs and activities in Harlow, reaching 63 people this year. It also supported the launch of Accuro Active, creating more opportunities for adults with disabilities to spend time together.

The Hut Mersea Island CIC

The Hut Mersea Island CIC provides free and affordable seaside breaks for families facing serious illness, disability, bereavement or caring responsibilities. Our funding helped maintain Harry Caravan, its accessible caravan in Clacton, enabling 29 families to enjoy a break this year, including 27 free stays.

"This holiday gave me a moment of peace, happiness, and connection that I truly needed."

A mum whose family received a free respite break through Harry's Caravan Programme

Accuro (Care Services) seaside trip and day out.



One of The Hut Mersea Island CIC's Harry Caravan guests.





Miriam, a dedicated volunteer, alongside trainee Luke, mastering the art of the perfect cappuccino at Phab Life's Community Cafe!

Phab Life

Phab Life's charity shop and community café give around 60 young adults with additional needs opportunities to gain practical skills, build confidence and make friendships. We helped support their running costs, enabling Phab Life to continue providing work experience and a welcoming place where people feel part of their community.

Happy Hill

Happy Hill supports children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), including those with very complex needs who can struggle to access other activities. Our funding helped provide 559 hours of specialist key-worker support this year, enabling more children to take part in activities outside home and school. Through consistent support and a focus on understanding each child's individual needs, Happy Hill helps children build confidence, communicate more effectively and access opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable to them.

The Harwich Festival

The Harwich Festival runs the Arts & Heritage Centre as a welcoming community hub used by around 500 people each week. Funding helped keep the centre open as a free Warm Space and supported the "I Belong When..." project, which brought 230 local people together to explore belonging.

Folk band Mambo Jambo led an interactive folk music workshop for the Harwich Festival, featuring singing, percussion and dance for all ages.





Golden Oldens Singing Group Session at Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre as part of the Harwich Arts Festival.

Bradwell on Sea Meet Up Monday Group

Bradwell on Sea Meet Up Monday Group brings 19 local people over 55 together each week for conversation, activities and outings. For many members, it is a chance to meet people they might not otherwise see and start the week feeling connected to their community. Funding helps cover costs, making it possible for the group to keep meeting and supporting one another.



Bradwell on Sea's Meet Up Monday Group in action.



ATF Southend (Achieve, Thrive and Flourish), a South Essex organisation supporting people at risk of exclusion, celebrates winning a High Sheriff Award in 2025/2026.

"We want young people to understand that the circumstances they're born into, the challenges they face, or any issues they may be experiencing do not define who they are or what they can achieve."

Rachael Long,
Head of Programmes and Delivery, ATF

High Sheriffs' Awards

In 2026, High Sheriff Julie Fosh DL presented High Sheriffs' Awards to 29 charities, with grants totalling £162,000. Among the winners were Together Free Foundation and ATF Southend, recognised for their work tackling exploitation and supporting young people at risk of crime.

Together Free Foundation received the Essex County Council Bowl for its work tackling modern slavery and human trafficking in Essex. ATF Southend received the Essex Police Cup for its Positive Futures Course, supporting young people at risk of criminal and challenging behaviour.



The 2026 Thrive Programme participants all meet for the first time at our offices.

Thrive programme

The Thrive programme helps charity leaders build their confidence, develop their leadership skills and strengthen their organisations. Delivered with the Cranfield Trust, it combines leadership workshops, peer learning and tailored consultancy or mentoring, giving leaders time to step back from the day-to-day and focus on their organisation's future.

The 2025 cohort brought together 11 charity leaders from across Essex and ran from March to October, with a new cohort beginning in March 2026. Alongside the workshops, each charity receives tailored support to address its individual needs.

"Thrive has been a transformative journey – empowering, enlightening, and deeply supportive. It has literally given me the tools and confidence to THRIVE!"

Angie Hannibal,
Chief Executive Officer, Butterfly Effect WELLbeing CIO



Daniel now has a dedicated physiotherapy area at home.

Individual Voices

A small number of ECF's charitable funds provide support directly to individuals, helping when financial barriers stand in the way of someone achieving their ambitions or getting the support they need. Wherever possible, we work with charities, schools and other organisations to identify people who could benefit.

Here are two of the individuals supported through these funds this year.

Daniel Merdar

Support from the **Douglas Allen Estate Agents Charity Fund** has provided Daniel Merdar with physiotherapy and helped towards creating a dedicated physiotherapy area at home. This gives Daniel a suitable space and equipment for his ongoing exercises and therapy.

"Being able to go to Germany and host an exchange student has given her even more ambition to study German."

Sue, Evangeline's Mum

"We're incredibly grateful to the Fund for the difference its support has made to Daniel and our family. It has eased some of the financial pressure on us and allowed us to focus more on giving Daniel the care and opportunities he needs. It means more to us than we can put into words."

Lucian, Daniel's Dad



Daniel Merdar and Family.

Evangeline Long

Support from the **Butler Educational Foundation** is helping Evangeline Long make the most of her education. Funding has helped towards essential textbooks and enabled her to take part in a two-week German exchange in Frankfurt. A passionate student of German, she hopes to study German and History at university, with ambitions to become a German teacher or translator.

Understanding Essex's Voluntary Sector

Knowledge and strength of the sector

Our work is shaped by our knowledge of the voluntary sector and the needs of charities and community groups across Essex.
This knowledge helps us understand local needs and strengths of the community, inform our funding and support, and bring people together to collaborate.
Through Our Ambition for 2030, we are committed to amplifying the voice of the voluntary sector, helping to unite and strengthen organisations across Essex, and using our insight and connections to influence how others work with the sector.
We want to be a bold and trusted independent voice, championing the sector's contribution and ensuring its experience and expertise are heard.



Local voluntary and community sector leaders meeting with Chris Vince MP at an Infrastructure Roundtable in Harlow.



Second Future of Essex event held at St John's Arts and Recreation Centre in Harlow, exploring the theme Connecting Innovation, Community and Commissioning.

Understanding Essex's voluntary sector

This year, we expanded how we listen to charities and community groups across Essex, helping us build a clearer picture of the needs and challenges facing the sector.

We developed an Advisory Group, bringing together organisations from across the VCSE sector in Essex. The group provides a space for open and honest discussion about the experiences and challenges facing organisations.

We also continued to convene our **Infrastructure Roundtable**, bringing infrastructure organisations across Essex together to discuss issues and developments affecting their work.

To build on this insight, ECF commissioned a 2026 **Community Listening Project** and audit of the sector. Bringing together research from across Greater Essex, the project will provide insights into the current state of the voluntary sector across Essex. The findings, published in autumn 2026, will help us understand the state of the sector and identify future priorities.



Above: Local voluntary and community sector leaders meeting with Chris Vince MP to discussion the Joint Vision in Harlow.

Below: Attendees in discussion at our first CommuniTea event, exploring new approaches to volunteering at our offices.



The Future of Essex event series brought together representatives from the voluntary, public and health sectors to discuss how they can work together differently as Essex prepares for significant changes to local government and public services. The discussions focused on building stronger partnerships, making better use of the strengths within communities and supporting a preventative approach to improving health and wellbeing across Essex.

Bringing people together

Throughout the year, we have created opportunities for donors and organisations to connect, share ideas and explore how they can work together to create greater impact.

We hosted our first **CommuniTEA** event with the Beresfords Foundation, bringing businesses, charities, community groups and donors together to explore how they can better support one another and create meaningful local impact. The first event focused on reimagining volunteering in Essex, with charities sharing what they need from businesses and how skills and expertise can offer valuable support.



Representatives from Maldon CVS, Headway Essex, Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome, Cool to Be Kind and Beresfords take part in a panel discussion at the first CommuniTea event.

Our **Private Client Adviser** events continued to bring together solicitors, financial advisers, wealth managers and other private client professionals from across Essex throughout the year. They provide valuable opportunities to build relationships and explore how we can work together to support clients with their charitable giving, including both lifetime giving and charitable legacies.

We also launched **Next Gen Essex**, a new network for emerging and newly qualified Private Client Advisers. It creates a more informal, peer-led space to build connections, share ideas and explore how philanthropy can add value to client relationships, while supporting professional development.



Attendees at the first Next Gen Essex Private Client Advisers Network event enjoyed a wine tasting and talk at Hatfield Place, with insights from Nicola Weldon of Ellisons Solicitors and Graham Doubtfire of Scrutton Bland on career development, networking and philanthropy.

Championing the sector







Dovercourt & Harwich Hub, which brought together leaders from the VCSE sector, health partners and local authority to discuss what a resilient and thriving Civil Society in Greater Essex would look like. **Centre image:** Maria Wilby, Operational Lead at RAMA (Refugee, Asylum Seeker & Migrant Action), speaking as a panel member.

A Joint Vision for Civil Society in Greater Essex



ECF developed and launched A Joint Vision for Civil Society in Greater Essex in partnership with the VCSE sector. It sets out a shared ambition for a trusted and thriving civil society and provides a practical framework for charities, community organisations, health and public sector partners to work together to meet the challenges facing communities.

The Joint Vision calls for civil society to be recognised as a full and equal partner in local planning and decision-making, genuine partnership in the design and delivery of services, and long-term, flexible and community-led investment.

Since launching in April 2026, the Joint Vision has received support from 70+ organisations and individuals, reflecting a shared ambition for a stronger and more connected civil society across Greater Essex.

"The voluntary sector in Essex are often the only representatives, accessible support services and advocates for the most marginalised and vulnerable among us. Including us is key to a strong and stable Essex."

Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Action (RAMA)

"Our shared vision demonstrates the determination of civil society to see wider impactful change within the County."

Brighter Opportunities for Special People (BOSP)

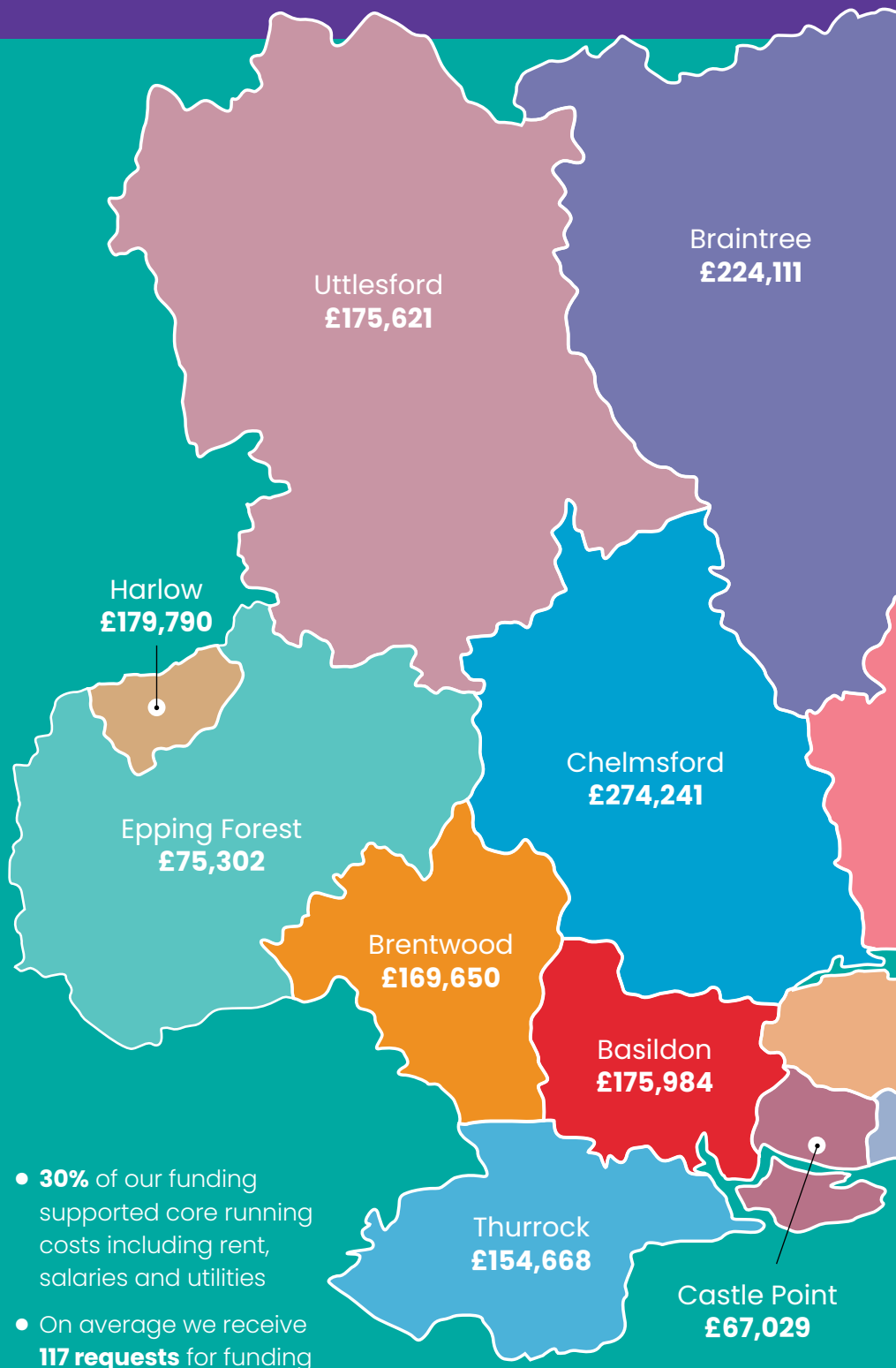
"The most important part of this work is listening to the sector and understanding what organisations are experiencing. By creating more opportunities for those conversations, we can make sure the sector's knowledge and experience is heard and help shape how partners work together through this period of change."

Julia Esse, Policy and Communications Manager, ECF

Grantmaking Across Essex 2025-26

Our year in numbers

- **£3.72 million** in grants paid to **476** voluntary organisations and **226** individuals
- **192** grants given for core or running cost support helping groups stay open and responsive
- **Nearly £200,000** invested in community spaces, transport, and equipment
- **63 grants** supported long-term projects through multi-year funding
- **24% rise** in applications, showing strong demand and sector resilience



Facts and figures

- The success rate for applicants applying to us for funding **46%**
- Number of first-time applicants **453**
- First time applicant success rate **31%**
- The average grant size **£5,396**
- **45%** of organisations we funded have an annual income of under £100,000

- **30%** of our funding supported core running costs including rent, salaries and utilities
- On average we receive **117 requests** for funding each month
- Our grants team delivered **1:1 advice** and guidance sessions to **305** potential applicants



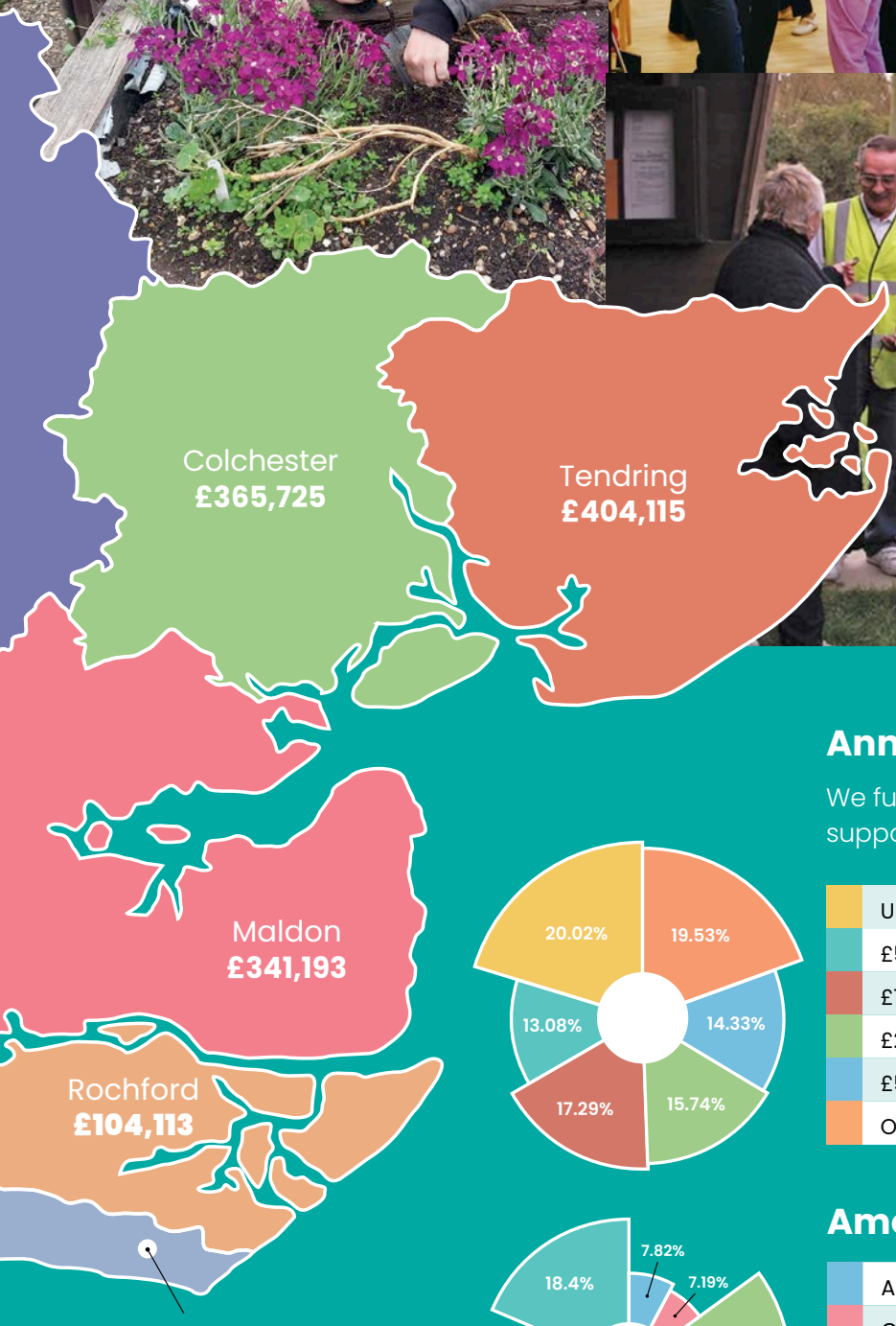


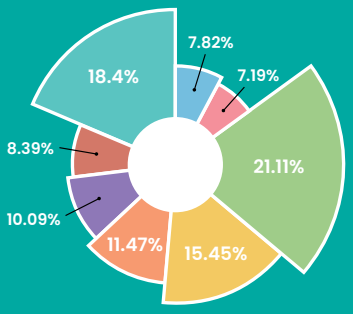
1: Trust Links, Growing Together community gardens, where people can come together through gardening, nature and shared experiences.

2: Dance Network Association - My Essex Photo Competition.

3: Wyvern Community Transport provides vital door-to-door transport services, helping residents across Rochford and Castle Point stay connected to their communities.







% Amount Paid

Within the total amount awarded £510,377 was awarded to organisations working across two or more districts.

In addition, £153,605 was awarded to organisations working outside the county.

Annual Income

We fund organisations of all sizes, but typically support groups with a smaller annual income.

Under 50k	**£609,481**	**20.02%**
£50k - £100k	**£398,236**	**13.08%**
£100k - 250k	**£526,429**	**17.29%**
£250k - £500k	**£479,241**	**15.74%**
£500k - £1 million	**£436,214**	**14.33%**
Over £1 million	**£594,366**	**19.53%**

Amount by Primary Issue

Advice, advocacy and mentoring	**£290,713**
Community safety	**£267,165**
Community support and wellbeing	**£784,605**
Education, learning and training	**£574,389**
Health, wellbeing and serious illness	**£426,416**
Mental health	**£374,936**
Poverty and disadvantage	**£311,959**
Social inclusion and fairness	**£687,330**

Thank you to our supporters

30 YEARS of generosity in Essex

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported our work over the last 30 years, helping us make a difference across the county, both now and in the future.

Thank you to our members, donors and partners, and to everyone who gives their time, energy and expertise to support our work. We are also grateful to everyone who has given their time and energy to help raise money for the charitable funds under our management, and to the businesses and organisations that partner with us to make a difference in their local communities.

As we celebrate 30 years of Essex Community Foundation, we are reminded of what can grow from a simple idea and the generosity of people who want to make a difference in their local community. Over three decades, your support has helped connect local giving with local need, strengthen communities and support thousands of organisations across Essex.

Thank you for being part of our story. We look forward to continuing this journey together and making a difference across Essex for many years to come.

























1. Jo Macaulay, Head of Stewardship with local radio hosts Steve Scruton and Ian Wyatt at our 30th Anniversary Summer Party.

2. Corporate fundholder Rickard Luckin's 10K Your Way challenge inspired colleagues to fundraise in their own way, raising more than £22,000 for local grants across Essex.

3. Our founding CEO Laura Warren receiving a donation from Barclays Bank, presented by Andrew Clarke. Andrew joined us as a volunteer in 2000 and, 26 years later, continues to bring his passion for grassroots organisations. We are hugely grateful for his time, knowledge and dedication, and the difference he has helped make to communities across Essex.

4. 1996: One of our earliest grants helped support the Colchester Toy Library, a valued community resource for local children and families.

5. Children at this year's Essex Schools Farming Day learned about farming, food production and rural safety through hands-on activities, supported by the Essex Rural Fund.

6. Trust Links Growing Together Community Garden.

7. 2025 winners of the High Sheriffs' Shield Award Kids Inspire.

8. Young service users from Accuro (Care Services), a charity supporting children and young people with disabilities and additional needs across Essex.

9. Southend Food Bank Volunteers.

10. Grant recipients Valerie Lolomari from Women of Grace and Joyce McIntrye from Rafiki Kitchen at our Summer Party. Both organisations provide safe spaces and support for migrant and African women locally, while raising awareness of issues such as FGM that affect their communities.

11. Enterprise East delivers inclusive, accessible and welcoming community outreach activities.

12. Ian Marks accepts a £4,000 donation from the Essex Chronicle for the Essex Millennium Fund, established by Essex County Council in 1999. The Fund later evolved into what is now known as the Essex Fund.

Financial highlights

taken from our financial statements

	2025/2026	2024/2025
Total income:	7,227,829	8,477,899
Endowment funds:	60,223,972	54,515,147
Donations to endowed funds:	3,900,688	5,339,028
Donations to restricted funds and grants:	2,068,926	1,778,396
Other income (including investment income):	1,258,215	1,360,475
The total cost of running the organisation:	1,238,218	1,061,308
Total unrestricted reserves:	1,150,893	1,327,010
Value of grants awarded from flow-through donations	1,506,804	1,723,973
Value of grants awarded from endowment funds:	1,917,751	2,380,725
Total grants awarded in the year:	3,424,555	4,104,698
Total funds under management:	62,780,614	56,787,799

"Having been part of ECF for 27 years, I've seen first-hand how much the Foundation has grown. From an endowment of £279,000 in our first year to more than £60 million today, the scale of that growth is remarkable. But what matters most is that, while ECF has grown and evolved, the purpose at the heart of what we do has remained the same, using generosity to make a lasting difference to communities across Essex."

Catherine Burton
Director of Finance & Resources

Our audited Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2025/2026 incorporating the auditors' report, will be available to download from our website after our Annual General Meeting on 12 November 2026. To request a hard copy please contact Catherine Burton, Director of Finance & Resources, on **01245 355947** or by e-mail to **hello@essexcf.org.uk**.

Auditors	HaysMac LLP
Bankers	Handelsbanken plc
Investments	Jupiter Investment Management Group Limited (formerly CCLA)
	Rathbones (Incorporating Investec Wealth & Investment)
	Cazenove Capital
Payroll	Streets LLP
Solicitors	Knights plc

Our team

Caroline Taylor
Chief Executive

Gavin Benn
Director of Programmes and Partnerships

Zoe Brampton
Grants Manager

Catherine Burton
Director of Finance & Resources

Dee Davies
Executive Assistant

Adeola Dosunmu
Grants Officer

Julia Esse
Policy & Communications Manager

Jesse Farrer
Marketing Manager

Lisa Green
Grants Officer

Nicole Green
Grants Assessor

Luke Harding
Grants Administrator

Tracy Hardy
Finance Manager

Gemma Healy
Grants & Stewardship Administrator

Maria Kravchuk
Grants & Operations Administrator

Jo Macaulay
Head of Stewardship

Steven Mackenzie
Head of Operations

Niamh Murphy
Fund Development Administration Officer

Perry Norton
Head of Development

Matthew Page
Finance Administrator

Frankie Webb-Huseyin
Grants Officer

Volunteers

Lorraine Brooks

Andrew Clarke

Barbara Garside

TRUSTEE BOARD	as at June 2026
Atul Manek	Chair Former CFO and COO, Insight Investment
Naz Biggs	Portfolio Manager, Impact on Urban Health
Charles Bishop DL	Chair, Finance and Investment Committee Former Partner and Chief Administrative Officer, Cazenove; High Sheriff of Essex 2023/24
Gemma Cartwright	Chair, Governance and Compliance Committee Head of Investment Practice & Partnership, Association of Charitable Foundations
Graham Chapman KC	Barrister, 4 New Square
Gail Cunningham	Consultant – charity investment governance and impact investment
Maggie Desmond	Chair, Advocacy Voice Strategic Communications Committee, Former strategy consultant with McKinsey & Company
Tim Field	Company Secretary, Partner, Knights plc
David Guest	Former Director European Operations, Crisil Greenwich Coalition; Chair, Daws Hall Trust; Governor, East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust
Gillian Hayter	Founder of Reboot Ltd; Former Trustee and Vice Chair of RCCE; Former Justice of the Peace for North Essex
Dorine Johnson	VP & Head of Corporate Communications, Franklin Templeton
Ben Minter	Portfolio Director – Charities, Cazenove Capital

Patron	
Jennifer Tolhurst	The Lord-Lieutenant of Essex, Kings Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS)
PRESIDENT	
Lord Petre JP KCVO	
VICE PRESIDENTS	
Nicholas Alston CBE DL	Former ECF Chair, Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex and High Sheriff, now Vice Chair of Governors at Anglia Ruskin University and Chair of Open Road
Dame Kate Barker CBE	Non-Exec Director, Taylor Wimpey; Non-Exec Director, Man Group
Jason Bartella	Managing Director, Heritage Leisure Group
Dr Jerome Booth	Economist and Financier; Chairman of New Sparta; Chair of the Governing Board, Anglia Ruskin University
David Boyle JP DL	President, Rural Community Council of Essex; Pro-Chancellor, University of Essex; High Sheriff of Essex 2002/03
Charles Clark OBE QPM DL	Chairman, Essex Police Museum Trust; Chair of the Diocese in Europe Safeguarding Committee
Giles Coode-Adams OBE DL	Former High Sheriff of Essex 2000/01; President of RHS 2006–08
George Courtauld OBE DL	President, Haven Gateway Partnership; Chairman, RCCE
Robert Erith BEM TD DL	President, Dedham Vale Society; High Sheriff of Essex 1997/98
Rt Rev Guli Francis-Dehqani	Bishop of Chelmsford
Simon Hall MBE DL	Former ECF Trustee, international law firm Partner and High Sheriff, currently serving as a Deputy Lieutenant of Essex and sits as trustee of several Essex-based charities.
Sandra Hollis	Former ECF Trustee and Fund Development Committee member with a background in global banking relationships, strategic marketing and senior leadership in higher education, including Pro Vice-Chancellor at Anglia Ruskin University
Ben-Julian Harrington	Former Chief Constable, Essex Police
Rupert Marks DL	Chairman of Pioneer Sailing Trust
Jonathan Minter FRCGP DL	ECF Trustee 2010–18; Chairman 2013–18
John Spence CBE DL	Former Councillor & Cabinet Member ECC; Governor Anglia Ruskin University Philanthropic Foundation; Member Chelmsford Cathedral Council; Chairman Spicer Haart Group
David Starling	ECF Fundholder

Join in and help us make a difference

Scan the QR code to give now:

Kinetika' s T100 Festival where local residents, community groups and artists shared local stories, designed silk flags and took part in community walks across Essex and Thurrock. This year, we are funding Kinetika to continue delivering community walks and creative workshops across Thurrock, bringing residents together and helping to strengthen local connections.



Essex Community Foundation

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EssexFoundation **Essex_CF** **Essex Community Foundation** **Essex_CF**

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