

Release issued in partnership by Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council

Business gives thumbs up for ‘Safer, Greener, Healthier’ revolution on city centre streets

Business leaders and health experts have welcomed ambitious plans to improve the safety, the environment and people’s health in Chelmsford city centre.

The project has been drawn up as a direct result of the COVID 19 pandemic to allow people to travel safely by walking and cycling over short distances.

New lanes for cycling and walking are to be introduced to Chelmsford from next week (Monday 8th June) to ensure those areas of the city centre with some of the highest footfall are safe and healthy places to move through, following the easing of lockdown restrictions and the re-opening of shops and businesses.

Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council have been working together to design and implement one of the first projects to make city/town centre public spaces safer for people. Called ‘Safer, Greener, Healthier’, the schemes aim to provide bigger, safer spaces for city centre shoppers, residents, workers and visitors to maintain social distance.

A series of interim traffic measures which will create more shared space for walking and cycling will be introduced in the city centre starting from Monday 8th June. 20mph limits, temporary barriers and signs providing shared spaces will be introduced on Duke St, Victoria Rd, New St and Market Rd.

The project is funded by part of the initial £1.9m Emergency Active Travel Fund for Essex recently announced by the Government for such schemes.

The Chelmsford scheme, like others planned across Essex, is driven by immediate public health requirements such as social distancing, but in encouraging walking and cycling it will enable healthier and greener ways of getting around.

Mike Wray, Manager of the One Chelmsford BID, said:

“One Chelmsford supports the initiative to make social distancing easier for everyone shopping, visiting or working in the city centre. We want to help people to have confidence that measures are in place to protect them and keep them safe when they come to the heart of Chelmsford.”

Dr Mike Gogarty, Director of Public Health, Essex County Council explains:

“Providing space for the public to practice safe social distancing remains a core part of the measures we need to limit the spread of coronavirus. Helping people to social distance in traditionally busy urban areas will help immediate public safety; it will also make it easier as businesses re-open.

“Walking and cycling are healthy activities in their own right, they can help to lessen traffic congestion and consequently improve air quality, so these new measures are very supportive of societal demand.”

Councillor Kevin Bentley, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, said:

“We have responded directly to people’s safety and their lead in increasing the use of cycle lands and pavements. While I recognise that many people will still need to use their cars this is a chance for people to think hard about driving over short distances. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to greatly improve our air quality and our health as well as the life opportunities for the next generation.

“Chelmsford is one of the first county schemes in the country to use this money to help people confidently return to shop and work, as lockdown measures continue to be carefully eased.”

Cllr Stephen Robinson, Leader of Chelmsford City Council, said:

“For over a year, Chelmsford Council has been pressing ahead with plans for a greener, safer and better-connected city. This crisis gives us a unique chance to support changes to travel habits on a permanent basis.

“These changes will help keep our residents safe and give them the confidence to come into our superb city centre and see it continue to thrive.”

Bus routes, taxi bays, disabled parking and delivery access in the streets included in the scheme will be maintained wherever possible, although some non-disabled parking facilities may be suspended.

The total money that could be made available to Essex by the Government if further plans are approved is up to £9.6m.

Why not log your cycle ride on some of the enhanced routes for National Bike Week at www.cyclinguk.org/bikeweek/7daysofcycling and let others in Essex know what you're doing too at www.lovetoride.net/essex?

People can share comments on the measures with Essex and Chelmsford councils at SGH.Routes@essex.gov.uk

Please see the full map and scheme details on our website at: www.essex.gov.uk/safer-greener-healthier