



Land of the Fanns
Thames Chase Trust,
Broadfields,
Pike Lane,
Upminster,
Essex RM14 3NS

01708 642950

www.landofthefanns.org

MEDIA RELEASE

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Land of the Fanns works with Essex County Council at Weald and Thorndon Country Parks to improve interpretation and access at these historic landscapes

Partners join forces to provide improved opportunities for people to access, understand and enjoy the parks

Spreading over east London and south west Essex, the Land of the Fanns is a fascinating landscape full of environmental and historic hidden gems. The five-year Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership Scheme aims to reconnect people to this area, uncovering the landscape, strengthening local attachment to, and enjoyment of it. Fanns comes from the Saxon word for fen meaning '*low marshy land or low-lying district*' which perfectly describes much of this landscape, historically an area of fens, forests and farming.

Now in its fourth year, the scheme's projects are starting to offer significant opportunities for people across the area to learn more about the natural history and heritage of this often overlooked and undervalued landscape on the edges of London and the south west of Essex.

Two such projects which will have a lasting impact on the landscape and opportunities for local people are those taking place in the Essex County Council owned country parks at Thorndon and Weald in Brentwood.

Councillor Simon Walsh, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action, said: "The project will see the commissioning of historic landscape research, in which the Essex Record Office and park community volunteer groups will be involved, to help piece together the valuable information about the sites' past, including previous owners, land use and changes that have occurred over the centuries. This history will be told through a series of Interpretation boards and walking trails, planned for installation in late 2021."

Both Thorndon and Weald Country Parks are ancient landscapes; fragile fragments of the original woodlands and natural environments that once made up much of the Land of the Fanns in the past. Originally part of the estate owned by the Lords Petre, Thorndon Country Park was enclosed in 1414 around the old Thorndon Hall, the foundations of which can just about be seen today in Ruin Wood.



Its landscape includes diverse habitats including ancient trees and pasture land grazed by rare breed cattle and goats. Weald Country Park's 520 acres of woodland, hay and wildflower meadows, deer park, open grassland and lakes were first designated a deer park in the 12th century and were once home to a great Tudor mansion. Fallow deer are still to be found in the park's deer enclosure today.

With the help of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, this two-year programme aims to increase the public's appreciation of these historic landscapes by improving access along key pathways. Essex County Council also plan to provide information about the history and characters of the parks over the centuries to bring the past to life. These developments offer a crucial opportunity to help bring new people from the local community to the parks to learn more about the landscapes and their stories, and provide new walking routes to encourage exercise too.

Benjamin Sanderson, Land of the Fanns Scheme Manager, said: "The value of these open spaces for people's health and wellbeing cannot be underestimated. We are living through a time when we need access to open space and nature more than ever and what better place to start than these fantastic country parks."

To find out more about the Land of the Fanns and how you can get involved in environmental and heritage projects, please go to www.landofthefanns.org. To discover what's happening in Essex Parks, please go to www.explore-essex.com

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For further information, images and interviews please contact:

Deborah Brady, Land of the Fanns Heritage Officer

Deborah.brady@thameschase.org.uk

Emma Williams, Marketing & Communications Lead,

Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Green Spaces, Essex County Council

Emma.Williams@Essex.gov.uk

Notes to editors

About Land of the Fanns

"The surviving London fans on the edge of east London – fens, forest and farms that despite being fragmented, are exceptionally rich in unique layers of geographical, built, natural and cultural heritage that has continually been evolving since the last Ice Age – will be positively managed and understood as the last remaining landscape of London as it once was" *Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership Vision*

The Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership Scheme is an ambitious five-year programme comprised of 26 individual projects. The scheme is aimed at engaging the local communities of



Havering, Barking & Dagenham, Thurrock, Brentwood and south-west Essex with the natural, geological, archaeological and built heritage of their local area.

This unique £2.4 million Scheme was awarded £1.36 million by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2016. The Scheme brings together a number of different partner organisations with a commitment to work towards a shared goal of enabling local people to discover, restore and enjoy what's special about the local landscape.

Website: www.landofthefanns.org

Essex County Council are one of the nine strategic partners in the Land of the Scheme. The other partners are: Forestry England, Thames Estuary Partnership, Brentwood Borough Council, London Borough of Havering, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, Thames21 and Thurrock Council. Thames Chase Trust is the project's lead partner. Thames Chase Community Forest is where the Land of the Fanns office is based.

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About the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk.

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

About Essex Country Parks

Essex Country Parks are owned and run by Essex County Council. They are part of Explore Essex which brings together a unique group of parks and heritage venues which are owned by [Essex County Council](#).

Our mission is to deliver a broad range of exciting facilities and events for the people of Essex.

Conservation is also at the heart of what we do. Any money spent with the Explore Essex group of places is ultimately reinvested to help maintain and develop the sites for the benefit of visitors, and the protection of the wildlife within.

Website: <https://www.explore-essex.com/>

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