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**Essex Summer of Culture programme of events to celebrate ‘The World Around Us’**

*A Summer of Culture 2022 launches this month celebrating all that is great about the thriving cultural sector in Essex and which encourages residents to connect with nature* and each other.

The Essex Summer of Culture will celebrate and connect communities and residents throughout the county and feature a range of events and activities by artists, dancers, creatives and writers.

Hosting a programme of partnered and funded cultural events and activities, the 2022 Essex Summer of Culture celebrates the diversity and energy of the cultural and creative scene across the county.

The Essex Summer of Culture theme this year is ‘*The World Around Us*’, which builds on the value which many people found by accessing creative and culture activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme celebrates the physical and mental health benefits of being outdoors while promoting the creative activities available to Essex residents in the county’s green spaces.

Councillor Graham Butland, Essex County Councillor Cabinet Member for Devolution, the Arts Heritage and Culture, said: “The Essex Summer of Culture will support the diverse and vibrant communities we have in Essex, from grassroots community groups to large organisations. With such a diverse range of art and cultural events across the county, there really is something for everyone to enjoy.

“An Essex Summer of Culture what’s on guide can be downloaded from the Explore Essex website and I would encourage everyone to take a look and take advantage of some of the fantastic events taking place near them this summer.”

The Essex Summer of Culture begins on Saturday 21 May with an exhibition about life on Mersea Island and Cudmore Grove Country Park during the pandemic. A Landscape Imaginary exhibition by arts duo, *Daniel & Clara,* features film screenings and children’s workshops on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 May from 10.00am - 5.00pm at East Mersea village hall. Maps for a self-guided walk around Cudmore Grove Country Park are also available from East Mersea village hall.

During the May half-term, the Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Explore Essex are hosting a series of free events at the Essex County Parks which culminate in a ‘Global Village Finale’ at Hadleigh Country Park on Sunday 3 July from 11.30am – 4.00pm. The family friendly events celebrate art and culture from around the world and will feature live music, dance performances and workshops from leading community organisations from across the county.

‘Books in the Park’ on Saturday 1 June sees the Essex Libraries Mobile Book Bus visit Weald and Thorndon Country Parks to promote a love of books in the great outdoors as part of the Essex Year of Reading.

The Essex Book Festival will be bringing Midsummer Madness – which features author events, live music and theatre – to heritage site Cressing Temple Barns on Saturday 25 June. Further literary events include the Essex Record Office and Essex Book Festival hosting environmental writer and poet, Wendy Constance, who will be running a writing workshop and exploring the history of flooding along the Essex coastline on Saturday 23 July.

The Essex Summer of Culture 2022 will also see work commence on the successful application to the *Explore Essex Arts Commission*,which focuses on climate change and aims to inspire residents and schoolchildren to think about the environment. The winning entry by Amanda Kelleher, ‘*Now: The Future. Curious Stories of Climate and Connection’,* will take place this summer and is free for the county’s residents to enjoy.

A free Essex Summer of Culture digital guide is available to the county’s residents which provides information about the events as well as the artists and cultural organisations involved.

\*To download the free Essex Summer of Culture guide please visit [www.explore-essex.com/culture/soc-guide](http://www.explore-essex.com/culture/soc-guide). For more information about the Essex Summer of Culture 2022 events taking place visit: [www.explore-essex.com/events](http://www.explore-essex.com/events)

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**Notes for editors:**

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**Explore Essex:** Explore Essex brings together a unique group of Country Parks and heritage venues which are owned by Essex County Council. Its mission is to deliver a broad range of exciting facilities and activities for the people of Essex with an emphasis on culture, heritage and environment. [www.explore-essex.com](http://www.explore-essex.com) @exploressex @exploreessex.

\*An updated version of the Essex Summer of Culture 2022 digital guide will be available from mid-June.