

Press Statement

18 May 2020 (JB)

Essex Country Park reopening

Essex County Council is pleased to announce that all Essex Country Parks will be reopening on Thursday 21 May.

Following the easing of restrictions to outside space announced recently by the Government, ECC Country Parks team have been working over the past few weeks to put in place necessary safety measures to ensure the parks can open in line with government guidance, and ensuring visitors and staff can remain safe.

The parks, car parks and toilets will be open to the public, however the children's play equipment, visitor centres and cafes will remain closed, in line with government guidance.

We would ask that all visitors using the Essex Country Parks follow social distancing rules, paying particular attention to these in areas such as the car parks and toilet facilities. We anticipate that the parks will be busy, and so ask residents to use their judgment in relation to their visit – considering the time of their visit and the park they choose to visit for example.

Essex County Councillor Simon Walsh, cabinet member with responsibility for Country Parks said: "I know the opening of Essex Country Parks will be a welcome announcement for many Essex residents, who appreciate the chance to spend time outdoors in our beautiful Essex parks. Now more than ever, we have seen how spending time outdoors can be beneficial for our physical and mental health.

We have taken the time to consider how we can safely open the parks and ensure social distancing rules can be followed and are now in a position where we can open, with some adjustments. Visitors are asked to plan for their visit and consider how they can enjoy our parks in the safest way – this might be considering if they could walk to their local park rather than drive, downloading the parking payment app MiPermit, or avoiding busy times. We also ask visitors to ensure they do not park

illegally or in unsafe locations to access the park as this puts pressures on local highways services.

We will continually monitoring the situation and if social distancing cannot be maintained and we are worried about the safety of visitors or our staff we will have to put in place further restrictions”

Changes that have been necessary to enable safe opening include:

- Restricted opening hours, all country parks with open at 9:00am and close at 5:00pm
- Once car parks are full we will have to limit access to the parks
- A move to contactless debit or credit card payments for carparking, to avoid minimising contact with cash machines. Alternatively you can download the car parking payment app in advance of your visit, further information can be found [here](#).
- Fishing will be permitted during Park open hours however we will no longer be accepting cash payment on the day of your visit at the following sites, Belhus Woods, Danbury and Weald,. If you are intending to fish you will need to purchase a fishing pass online in advance of your visit. Please note we will only be offering day passes during this reopening period.

The Parks reopening on 21 May are listed below. Sky ropes and play equipment will not be available at any of our sites until further notice.

- Belhus Woods Country Park
- Cressing Temple Barns
- Cudmore Grove Country Park
- Danbury Country Park
- Great Notley Country Park
- Hadleigh Country Park
- Marsh Farm Country Park
- Thorndon North Country Park
- Thorndon South Country Park
- Weald Country Park

For further information please visit our FAQ page [here](#).