



# RIVER CROUCH COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM

## ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 2022 - NOVEMBER 2023



## WHO ARE WE?

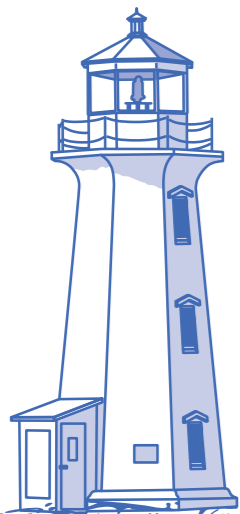
The River Crouch Coastal Community Team (RCCCT) is a local partnership consisting of local authorities, district and parish councils from Maldon, Chelmsford and Rochford, working together with a range of volunteers with business interests within the coastal community surrounding the Rivers Crouch and Roach in Essex.

This report summarises the activities of the River Crouch Coastal Community Team from November 2022 to November 2023 and identifies the projects started in 2023.

## VISION STATEMENT

*The River Crouch Coastal Community Team will facilitate and support the growth of the local economy through developing a sustainable visitor offer by concentrating on the river users and associated businesses operating on the land adjoining the rivers.*

*Success will be an improved tourism offer, a greater and more varied commercial offer for businesses and an improved infrastructure for access to the Rivers Crouch and Roach.*



## GOVERNANCE

The work of the RCCCT is led by a Steering Group, annual elections take place at the Annual General Meeting each November and are shown at the back of this report.

This is the fourth Annual General Meeting of the River Crouch Coastal Community Team (RCCCT) since Rochford District Council took over the secretariat and the Accountable Body role in July 2019.

It is being circulated to the stakeholders of the River Crouch Coastal Community Team electronically.

## RCCCT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

**The focus of the RCCCT centres around three key aims for rural and coastal communities along the rivers Crouch and Roach.**

- Improvement of business diversity and economic growth, including infrastructure, employment and skills
- Creation of sustainable communities and place shaping, including heritage and green tourism, and
- Protection and conservation of the coastal and river environment - including addressing the effects of coastal climate change.

**The objectives of the RCCCT are:**

- To be a consultative stakeholder body for local and national issues relating to the RCCCT key aims
- To identify and apply for funding sources intended to achieve tangible, evidence based outcomes which support those aims, and
- To facilitate projects which will deliver those outcomes.

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2022- 2023

## ESSEX PATH TO PROSPERITY PROJECT

The Path to Prosperity project raises awareness about the Essex coast to encourage more local people and visitors to enjoy the wide range of opportunities available in the area.

The Steering Group has continued to support the Path to Prosperity project, which received funding from Essex County Council.

The project installed weatherproof information boards at strategic points around the rivers and incorporated 'Go Jauntly' a popular digital app which can also be assessed and downloadable via QR codes on the boards.

Whilst the Path to Prosperity project has ended, Maldon District Council's Tourism Group has submitted a successful bid to host an annual walking festival across the District.

The only outstanding works to be completed is for Chelmsford City Council is to install the remainder of new information boards on the river front at South Woodham Ferrers, where delays due to localised flooding had prevented access.

## BIRD AWARE ESSEX COAST

The Bird Aware Essex Coast team has been set up as part of a partnership between local authorities and wildlife organisations with the goal of protecting internationally important migrating birds that visit our shores. Bird Aware is responsible for collecting data from the Path to Prosperity footfall counters, located along both the River Crouch, the River Roach, South Woodham Ferrers and Hullbridge sea walls.

## KING CHARLES III ENGLAND COAST PATH

Following the Coronation of the King Charles III, The National Coastal Path in England, has been renamed the King Charles III England Coast Path, The corresponding Coastal Paths in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have similarly been renamed to distinguish the devolved governments.

Darren Braine, Senior Adviser and lead for the England Coast Path stretch around the Crouch Estuary from Natural England, which includes Burnham to Wallasea, provided an update to the Steering Group in October 2023:

The Planning Inspectorate undertook their site visits to the areas bordering the Crouch where objections were raised by some land owners/occupiers to the proposed England Coast Path. Since that date, both the objecting parties and Natural England have been waiting to hear the outcome of the Planning Inspectors visits and recommendations which they made to Defra.

- About half of the King Charles III England Coastal Path is open for what is planned across the ceremonial county of Essex.
- One section of the Coast Path in Essex was approved in April 2021. This section received no objection, so there was no need for the Secretary of State to await the conclusion of any Planning Inspectorate visit, which allowed them to give their approval at an earlier date.

This approval does not mean that the stretch is open and available for public use, but that Essex County Council can proceed to establish the trail (signage, new access lengths, clearing scrub, new gates instead of stiles etc).

To date, Essex County Council have not been in a position to make an application to Natural England to fund these works, so there has been no progress on establishing this section.

Only once a section is established can parliament sign the commencement order that legally starts the right of access and the trail becomes open for that section.

- Therefore over the whole stretch between Wallasea Island and Burnham on Crouch, we have little progress towards opening of the integrated route and none of this absence of progress is within the control of Natural England.
- The stretch around Wallasea Island itself is open and this continues as an open section towards Southend and then on to Tilbury, where it crosses the Thames and continues open on the Kent side.
- The stretch from Burnham on Crouch, around the Dengie to Maldon and on to Salcott is also open.

*Natural England are willing to answer queries, or where there are specific agenda items relating to the England Coast Path or any of their other work areas (such as the Site of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI), so the RCCCT will continue to liaise with them.*

## IMPROVING AWARENESS OF THE RCCCT

A group was originally formulated in June 2022 to take forward the recommendations of the 'Moving Forward' Workshop. The conclusion from this workshop was that few people had heard of the work of River Crouch Coastal Community Team and their achievements.

As a result a small working group was set up to raise awareness of the River Crouch Coastal Community Team and their projects. This summary of the longer and more formal Annual Report forms part of this project and will be distributed to RCCCT stakeholders

The RCCCT Steering Group agreed at its meeting in October 2023 that membership of the project group would be revised with part of its remit to identify "quick hit" projects, up to value of £2k, where a bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund might be successful.





## FUTURE PROJECTS

### 3 new footpaths proposals

- A possible new footpath from Wickford to Battlesbridge has been identified and mapped out to make a continuous route linking with other footpaths, which does not go over any railway lines. The RCCCT are seeking ways to fund a footbridge that would be required over the river.
- Creating a possible new “Coast to Coast” footpath from South Woodham Ferrers to Maldon following the old Railway line is being explored.
- A proposed footpath From Brandy Hole to the Dome and Lower Road, Hockley, which is not easily passable is also being examined.

The first point of call is a discussion with the Footpath Officer at Essex County Council as new footpaths needed to reach a certain specification. It is noted that any new footpath would also need to be adopted and maintained.

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Following the “*Moving forward*” workshop, it was identified that the RCCCT should improve its communication, updating projects with stakeholders and by the introduction of a bi-annual newsletter.

## STRUCTURE OF THE RCCCT IN 2022 -2023

The Steering Group is scheduled to meet 4 times a year.

Copies of the minutes of meetings are available from Rochford District Council

The work of the RCCCT is led by a Steering Group. In accordance with the group’s Terms of Reference; annual elections take place at the AGM in November, the following appointments were agreed by voting in November 2021:

- Chairperson – Cllr Mrs. June Lumley, Elected Councillor from RDC
- Vice Chairperson (Business, Maritime Community or Independent) – Doug MacEwen, Representative of the Boating Community.

Following the May 2023 local elections at Rochford District Council a vacancy on the Chair position was taken by Cllr Michael Hoy from RDC at the 2023 RCCCT AGM. The Vice Chair position remains Doug MacEwen.

## MEMBERS OF THE RCCCT STEERING GROUP ARE NOTED BELOW

- Accountable Body - Elected Councillors RDC - **Cllr Michael Hoy & Cllr Mrs Jo McPherson**
- Accountable Body - Director of Environment, Rochford District Council - **Marcus Hotton**
- Accountable Body - Economic Development Officer RDC - **Paula Chapman**
- Public Sector - Elected Councillor from MDC - **Cllr Doug O Bown**
- Public Sector - Specialist (Tourism) - Communications, Marketing & Engagement from MDC - **Alexis Corless**
- Public Sector - Economic Development Officer - Chelmsford City Council - **Helen Quinnell**
- Public Sector - Elected Cllr - Hullbridge Parish Council - **Cllr David Flack**
- Public Sector - Elected Cllr - Canewdon Parish Council - **Cllr Mike Halford**
- Public Sector - Elected Cllr - Ashingdon Parish Council - **Cllr Glen Dryhurst**
- Public Sector - Elected Cllr - Rettendon Parish Council - **Cllr Joe Parsad**
- Public Sector - Elected Cllr - Burnham-on-Crouch Town Council - **Cllr Stephen Stratton**
- Public Sector - Elected Cllr - South Woodham Ferrers Town Council - **Cllr Alan Shearring**
- Public Sector - Essex Coast RAMS Delivery Officer - Chelmsford City Council (Bird Aware) - **Leanne Brisland**
- Maritime Sector - Crouch Harbour Authority - **Ken Wickham**
- Maritime Sector - Representative from the Boating Community - **Doug MacEwen**
- Independent - RCCCT Vice Chairperson 2019 & 2020 - **Keith Powell**
- Independent - Representative of Essex Coastal Land Owners - **Andrew St Joseph**
- The Business Community - RSPB - **Rachel Fancy**
- The Business Community - 3 Chambers (Hockley, Rayleigh, Rochford) - **Dave Record**
- The Business Community - Baltic Distribution Limited - **Robert Brown - General Manager**
- The Business Community - Battlesbridge Business - **Roy Hart**
- The Business Community - *vacancy*