



**Have  
your say!**

9 October until 19 November 2023

**Recycling Centre Bookings  
Consultation proposal**

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# Background

Everyone's Essex sets out Essex County Council's strategic purpose, including the aim of a high-quality environment. The aim includes a commitment to minimise waste, increase recycling and achieve net zero carbon emissions. Essex County Council is committed to the provision of high-quality services which balance the needs of residents with protecting the environment and ensuring value for money.

## Overview

Essex County Council (ECC) is the Waste Disposal Authority. ECC is responsible for disposing of waste collected by the district, city and borough councils, and providing Recycling Centres for Household Waste ("recycling centres") for residents. ECC operates **21 recycling centres**. Since 2022 a recycling centre booking process has been trialled. ECC is seeking views on our proposal to retain the booking process.

## Our booking system pilot

In 2022, Essex County Council started a pilot requiring users to book visits to recycling centres. The pilot was introduced in response to challenges of high demand at peak times, particularly at weekends, which at times led to queuing and congestion, affecting neighbouring properties and the environment, reducing operational efficiency and causing longer waiting times.

The purpose of the pilot was to test if a booking system to manage demand across the available opening hours would:

- improve operational efficiency
- reduce congestion at recycling centres
- help manage waiting times by smoothing demand across available opening hours
- improve the customer experience
- reduce misuse by commercial vehicles
- encourage users to separate recyclable waste by creating a more positive on-site experience

There have been three phases in the pilot:

- **phase 1:** From February 2022, large vehicles were required to book a slot to visit the nine large (van-friendly) sites
- **phase 2:** From June 2022, cars were required to book a slot to visit Rayleigh Recycling Centre
- **phase 3:** From March 2023, all vehicles were required to book a slot to visit all recycling centres

During the pilot, pedestrians, cyclists and Blue Badge holders have been exempt from booking.

We are now holding a public consultation on our proposal to retain the booking system at all sites and for all vehicles.

## About the booking process

A simple and accessible booking process is in place for all vehicles at all 21 recycling centres. There is one booking system for cars and cars with single-axle trailers, and one for vans, pickups and large trailers at the nine large (van-friendly) sites.

- bookings can be made online via the **Love Essex website**. Users can also make a telephone booking through the ECC Contact Centre, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm
- booking slots are for a single 15-minute visit for cars, 20 minutes for large vehicles
- bookings can be made with as little as 15 minutes notice or up to six weeks in advance
- as each recycling centre is different, the number of available booking slots is set on a site-by-site basis
- users can cancel bookings that are no longer required

During the pilot, pedestrians, cyclists and Blue Badge holders have not been required to book. Residents from nearby areas in Suffolk and Hertfordshire can also use recycling centres due to reciprocal agreements with the Waste Disposal Authorities.

We have made and tested improvements to the booking system throughout the pilot, including:

- introducing the ability to make same-day bookings, up to 15 minutes in advance (subject to availability)
- increasing the number of bookable slots at all sites
- reviewing the timing and duration of planned closures for operational activities
- increasing the time in advance that slots are available to book (up to six weeks)
- adding more information to the website to make it easier to cancel a booking

## Evaluation of the pilot

The earlier phases of the pilot for large vehicles and for all vehicles using Rayleigh Recycling Centre were evaluated in Autumn 2022. An Evaluation of Phase 1 and 2 was published in December 2022 and is available to read **here**.

Learning from the evaluation, we implemented Phase 3 – requiring bookings at all sites and for all vehicles.

An interim evaluation of Phase 3 has been carried out to help inform the proposal for a permanent booking process. It brings together a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, including site observations on patterns of demand, queues and congestion, tonnage data, user feedback and fly-tipping rates.

The interim evaluation shows user satisfaction with the booking system is high, and people are finding the system easy to use. Results also show users feel positive about the ease of access, queuing and traffic control, and site staff have reported waiting time has reduced. Overall, analysis of data collated from local councils has not identified any evidence that the introduction of the booking system has impacted fly-tipping levels.

To view the interim evaluation report, please visit:

**[www.essex.gov.uk/recyclingcentrebookings](http://www.essex.gov.uk/recyclingcentrebookings)**

We will continue collecting data throughout 2023 and publish a final evaluation report alongside results of the public consultation as part of any future decision regarding recycling centre bookings.

# Our proposals

ECC is proposing to keep a vehicle booking process permanently at our 21 recycling centres.

## Proposal summary

The key points of the proposal are:

- bookings will be required at all sites and all opening hours
- bookings will be required for users in a car and car with a single axle trailer
- bookings will be required for users wishing to visit one of the nine van-friendly sites in a large vehicle
- Blue Badge holders, pedestrians and cyclists will not have to book
- bookings can be made **online**. Users can also make a telephone booking through the ECC Contact Centre, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm

## Supporting evidence

To support consultation respondents in making an informed response, the following supporting information has been published:

- phases 1 and 2 of the pilot were evaluated in Autumn 2022. To view the report, please visit the **[Love Essex website](#)**
- phase 3 booking pilot interim evaluation. Visit **[www.essex.gov.uk/recyclingcentrebookings](http://www.essex.gov.uk/recyclingcentrebookings)** to view the report

Previous decisions have been taken about Recycling Centre Bookings in January 2022 and January 2023. Decision papers are available to view **[here](#)**.

These include our Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment (ECIA).

## Further reading

In January 2023, a report funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) was published on research into possible links between recycling centre booking systems and incidents of fly-tipping.

To view the report, please visit the **[Love Essex website](#)**.

# Consultation and next steps

We will publish a summary report of the consultation feedback after the consultation is complete and responses have been analysed.

## What is a consultation?

Consultations are a way for you to tell us your views about a proposed project or change to services.

**Public participation is very important to how we develop our services, projects, and policies. Feedback is carefully considered and can have a big effect on the direction we take.**

## Have your say

This consultation on recycling centre bookings is carried out in line with the best practice guidelines from The Consultation Institute and the Gunning Principles (see **The Consultation Institute**)

The proposal document and supporting evidence is available **here** and in your **local library**.

The Public Consultation Questionnaire is available for six weeks **here**.

To request it in another format, please call 0345 603 7625.

The consultation period will open on 9 October 2023 and closes on 19 November 2023. Paper copies will be accepted via post for a further five days, closing on 24 November 2023.

## What happens next?

We will publish a summary report of the consultation feedback after the consultation is complete and responses have been analysed.

The feedback obtained from responses to the Public Consultation Questionnaire and other consultation mechanisms, together with other relevant information, will be used to inform a future decision on whether to keep a booking process for recycling centres in Essex.

This information is issued by:  
Essex County Council  
Recycling and Waste

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