



GO TO PLACES

Essex Big Weekend 2018

**BIG WEEKEND™**

Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th March 2018



**External campaign report**

May 2018

## Campaign Objectives

- To raise awareness of the fantastic attractions Essex has to offer
- To give attractions the opportunity to reach new audiences
- To develop a sense of pride in Essex and what it has to offer visitors
- To engage local residents in tourism
- To encourage word of mouth recommendation
- To educate residents and local politicians about the value of tourism to the local area
- To encourage regular repeat visits with the Visiting Friends and Relatives market

## Format

- Thousands of free tickets and/or an added value offers donated by tourism businesses exclusively for local residents' use on either the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018
- Local residents could enter an online ballot to bid for as many tickets as they wished, with two tickets per household allocated at random
- Participating attractions could limit the number of tickets available
- Tickets could only be applied for via an online ballot. The Big Weekend was created by destination management specialists Go To Places, who provided Visit Essex with a bespoke digital platform and campaign plan and toolkit to help them organise, launch and promote the event.

## Summary of preliminary results

- 2018 marks the second year of the Essex Big Weekend
- 57 attractions took part offering 133 experiences in Essex
- 2,537 winners with over 5,400 pairs and family tickets were available from the website
- An outstanding 6,700 residents registered
- Over 97,000 bids were made for tickets
- There were 25,941 unique visits to the website and a total of 445,743 page views
- 100% of Big Weekend survey participants stated that the Essex Big Weekend was either good or a very good idea.
- 100% of Big Weekend survey participants stated that they would visit the attraction again
- 84% would recommend the attraction to family and friends 74% would visit more places in Essex as a result of Big Weekend
- 97% would be proud to show their family and friends around Essex

## Participating attractions

Adventure Island	Leisure World Colchester
Audley End House and Gardens	Lifthouse Spa & Hotel
Audley End Miniature Railway	Marks Hall Garden and Arboretum
Barleylands Farm Park	Moby Adventure Golf
Beach Huts - Promenade Park Maldon	Museum of Power
Beth Chatto Gardens	Naze Tower
Billericay Brewing	Nuclear Wild Forest
Braintree District Museum	Redwings Horse Sanctuary - Ada Cole
Chelmsford City Racecourse	RHS Garden Hyde Hall
Clayhill Vineyard	Rollerworld & Quasar
Colchester Castle	Rope Runners Ltd
Colne Valley Railway	Rye House 9-Hole Crazy Golf
Combined Military Services Museum	Rye House Kart Raceway
Crazy Golf at Waldegraves Holiday Park	Rye House Laser Combat
Cressing Temple Barns	Rye-Assic Adventure Park
East Anglian Railway Museum	Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre
Epping Ongar Railway	Seal watching Harwich
Escape Live	Sky Ropes at Gt Notley Country Park
Essex Cricket	Splash Park
Essex Stragglers Orienteering	Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome
Fishing at Waldegraves Holiday Park	Summer Screen
FootGolf at Waldegraves Holiday Park	Taster Dinghy Sailing
Friary Walled Garden	The East Anglia Pass
Gilwell Park London	The Gardens of Easton Lodge
Green Island Gardens	The Munnings Art Museum
Hedingham Castle	The Nuclear Option
intu Lakeside	Tilbury Fort
Lee Valley Caravan Park, Dobbs Weir	Visit Colchester Information Centre
Lee Valley Park Farms	Warner Textile Archive
Lee Valley White Water Centre	

## Top 10 most popular attractions 2018

Number of Applications	Attraction Name
15662	Beach Huts - Promenade Park Maldon
6073	Seal watching Harwich
4824	Audley End House and Gardens
4404	Splash Park
3750	Adventure Island
3707	Rope Runners Ltd
3414	Barleylands Farm Park
3237	Lifthouse Spa & Hotel
2371	Colchester Castle
2167	Lee Valley Park Farms

# Marketing & PR

The Big Weekend was marketed both on- and off-line, using traditional and digital media across the county of Essex.

## Offline Marketing & PR

Postcards and posters were issued to Visitor Information Centres, libraries, GP surgeries, Essex Life Magazine, Beresford Estate Agents and all participating attractions. A4, A3 and A1 posters were distributed to Anglia line railway stations, and to Essex County Council. A total of 20,000 postcards and 500 posters were distributed.

Adverts were placed in magazines and newsletters to create brand awareness around the second Essex Big Weekend for a total spend of £725.00

There were five interviews scheduled at key points of the campaign, when the ballot opened, just before it closed and post event. Three interviews of Carol Jolly were with BBC Radio Essex and two with Radio Essex, whilst Heart Radio provided shout outs for week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> February and they featured a competition on their website to win an overnight stay at Waldegraves Holiday Park and a family ticket to Colchester Castle, which saw 453 entries. Braintree TV posted a video on their homepage free of charge.

The Essex Big Weekend 2018 received significant media coverage, with local media profiling the event from early January 2018 through to the final event itself and beyond, using the templates provided by Go To Places.

## Digital Marketing

### Big Weekend Website



Overall 46,916 visits were made to the Essex Big Weekend website (compared to 45,723 in 2017) from 26,207 unique visitors. There were 447,007 page views.

The top performing traffic referrals in terms of users are:

- e-newsletters (gov-delivery) – 3,034
- Facebook – 2,438
- e-newsletter (dms.co.uk) – 2,413
- e-newsletter (outlook) – 661

- Ecco News – 555
- Gazette News – 550
- Visit Essex – 493 vs 1,111 in 2017
- e-newsletter (onenews.essex.gov.uk) - 369

## Visit Essex Website

The Visit Essex team maximised space on their own website to promote the event with a website take-over, as recommended by Go To Places.

## Online banners

A number of Visit Essex's members' websites featured banners to advertise the Big Weekend. In addition, banners were placed on the Essex Pass and Beresfords Estate Agents' websites.

Banner example:



## Social Media

A comprehensive marketing tool kit provided by Go To Places was designed for both the tourism businesses and the Visit Essex team. The kit included both social media post templates and suggested hashtags. Social media was used in the lead up to the event to encourage sign up from businesses, residents and during the event to share content. Looking at the Google Analytics' results from the Big Weekend website, both Facebook and Twitter played a positive role in directing traffic to the website and a good level of engagement.

### Facebook Pay Per Click campaign

The PPC campaign (8<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> March) generated 318 clicks to the website with a reach of 47,145 people.

**Facebook – 232 new followers between 8<sup>th</sup> February and 25<sup>th</sup> March**

**Facebook engagement – 4.1K (2.1K reactions, 1.7K comments, 328 shares)**





Visit Essex

Published by Carol Jolly [?] · 22 March · 🌐

So to celebrate the Essex Big Weekend we have another little prize draw for you - you can win 2 free entry tickets to [Marks Hall Gardens & Arboretum](#) In Coggeshall (valid after the Big Weekend and not on event days). All you have to do to enter is like and comment on this post (and follow our page too if you don't already!) The draw will close at midnight on Sunday. Winner will be notified next week. Good luck! 😊



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The top three Facebook posts achieved a reach of 15,220 people – messaging included the announcement of the Big Weekend registration phase, the photo selfie competition and an additional competition.

## #EssexBigWeekend

Between the 24<sup>th</sup> February and 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018, the campaign hashtag was found in 84 posts, used by 40 different users, gaining the reach of 140,216 people and receiving 512,339 impressions.

The top posts were from Visit Colchester, the Braintree Museum and BBC Radio Essex.

## Twitter

The statistics from the launch of the Essex Big Weekend website to the Big Weekend event (8th February – 25<sup>th</sup> March) show an extra 207 Followers and a positive level of engagement.

Engagement: 86  
21 Retweets  
60 Likes  
5 Replies

The first Tweet was posted by Visit Colchester, on 8th February, encouraging attractions to register and take part in the Big Weekend:



A number of attractions also used the Tool Kit provided by Go To Places to promote the Big Weekend event:



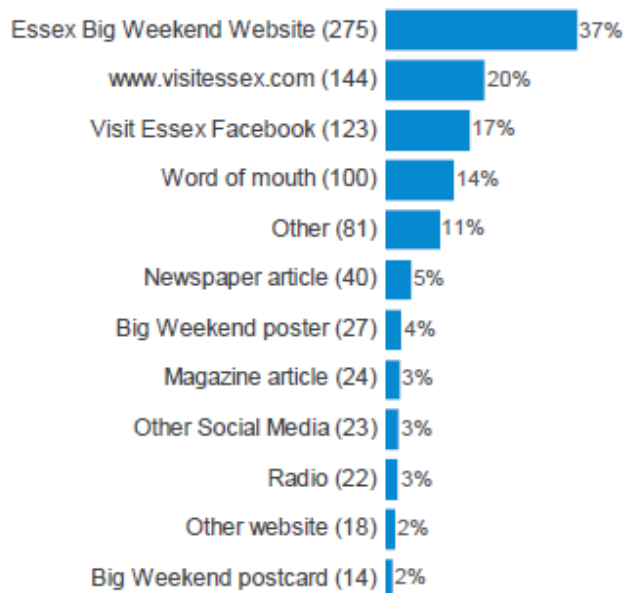
## Topline social media results

Facebook performed better than Twitter in terms of new followers and reach:

- Facebook new followers: **234**
- Facebook top post reach: **6,678**
- Facebook top three posts reach: **15,220**
- Facebook Pay Per Click campaign reach: **47,145** - for £106.81 investment
- Twitter new followers: **207**
- Twitter engagement: **86**

# Consumer feedback

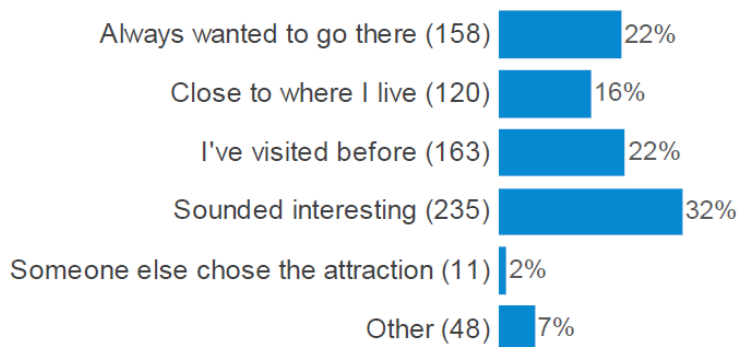
## Main source of information



Traditional routes for publicity – local press and word of mouth – were dominated by digital media such as Facebook and both the Visit Essex and the Essex Big Weekend websites.

Word of Mouth being in 4th position demonstrates that residents are actively spreading the word about the campaign.

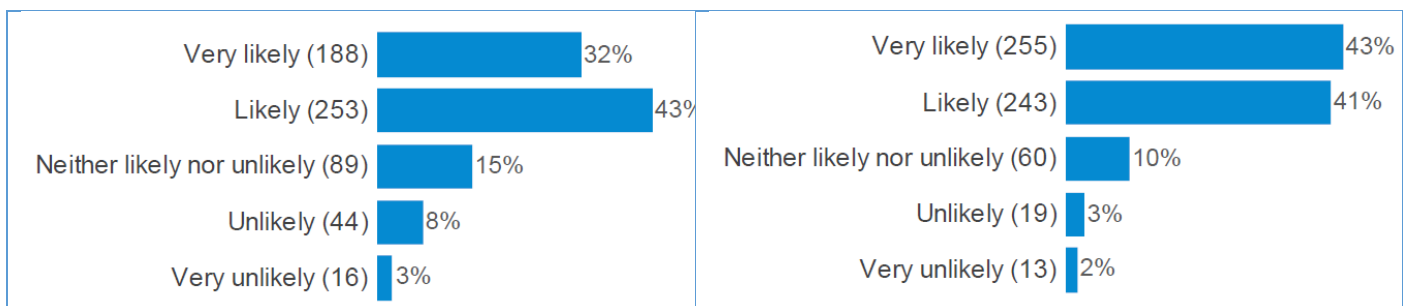
## Reasons for choosing the attraction



Other reasons include that the attraction was suitable for children. Some wanted to try something new, to please a family member who enjoyed a particular activity like fishing and a few picked up unused tickets after the ballot was run.

## Likelihood to visit again VFR

## Likelihood to recommend to



The vast majority of respondents enjoyed their visit and were satisfied with the overall experience and customer service received. 75% of the respondents planned to visit again and 84% would recommend to friends and family. Those who don't intend to come back have said that some of the facilities were in need of work, some felt visitors needed



a specific interest to visit some attractions, others felt it wasn't value for money had they had to pay.

## Participant comments:

*"Was a great opportunity to go because normally it is too expensive for a family ticket. Thank you very much."*

*"We really enjoyed our day. I have always wanted to take a boat to see seals but did not realise this was available in Harwich until the Big Weekend, so it is great to know we can do this in Essex! I would (and have) recommend the trip to others."*

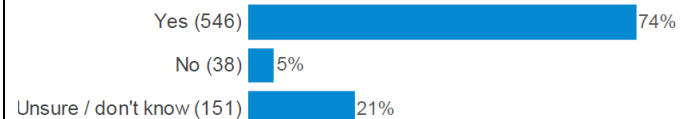
*"The staff were all very friendly and extremely welcoming and knowledgeable, especially a volunteer called Nicola - big thank you to her and thanks to the Big Weekend team for organising such a fab weekend full of events."*

*"Went last year and this year even better."*

## Are you proud to show VFR around Essex?

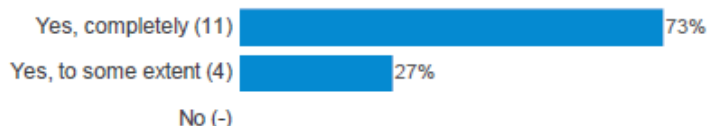


## As a result of EBW would you visit more Essex attractions?



## Business feedback

### Did you think the Big Weekend was a good idea?

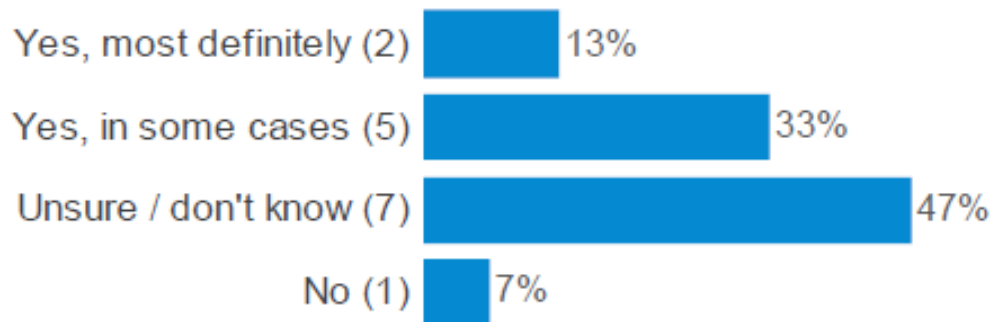


### Did you think the Big Weekend should continue?



100% of the respondents feel that the Big Weekend is a good idea and should continue. The attractions find the Big Weekend useful for advertising and publicity, and reaching new audiences that might not have considered visiting before. Some mentioned the positivity of having the data capture. A lot have managed to engage with Big Weekend participants and encourage repeat visits. Attractions were also pleased to be involved in a local initiative where a wide variety of Essex businesses work together to promote the county as a whole.

## Did you see secondary spend taking place elsewhere in your attraction, retail or catering outlets?



46% of businesses report seeing some secondary spend during the Big Weekend whilst many are not aware so additional spend could have taken place.

Overall attractions were very pleased with the ballot system and all respondents felt they had sufficient information prior to the event and that the campaign was very well organised.



# GO TO PLACES

Bringing people together, making places thrive

Go To Places provides destination management services across the UK, offering expert advice, outstanding marketing campaigns, robust research and funding know-how to make places thrive.

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