



Changing Places facility opens



West Mersea Town Council (WMTC) has successfully completed its project to install a specialist Changing Places facility at Victoria Esplanade. It becomes part of a national network of facilities to provide fully accessible toilets with specialist equipment. Despite some initial concerns and misunderstanding of its use, a Changing Places facility changes lives.

Recent research by the disability charity Sense, shows there are currently 14.7 million disabled people in the UK, and of those there are 1.6 million with complex disabilities. This figure is expected to rise to 2 million by 2029. The number of Changing Places facilities around the country is 1729, which is not enough.

Like many locations around the country, WMTC made its own commitment to provide such a facility for our residents and visitors. WMTC worked closely with North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) and Colchester Borough Council to agree the location, style and size of the building. We are grateful to both organisations for their support and encouragement.

WMTC secured funds of £55,000 from Essex County Councils Short Breaks for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities capital program, which supports projects enabling disabled children and young people to have greater access to their community and days out with family and friends, such as seaside resorts, and so enjoy life on a more equal basis.

As many locals will be aware, the project had some challenges and unforeseen issues. WMTC Project Manager Cllr Sophie Weaver explains: “While the project took longer and was more complicated than expected to execute, the specialist contractor was responsible for all the additional cost so this facility represents fantastic value to the community. So far we have had only positive comments from those who need this facility. That makes it all worthwhile.”

WMTC are pleased to be part of the growing and much needed number of Changing Places found across the country. It is now included on the national scheme for Changing Places and highlighted on their maps. It will literally put Mersea on the map for being a welcoming and inclusive place to visit and live. Further information on Changing Places can be found at: <https://www.changing-places.org/>



West Mersea Mayor Cllr Carl Powling (pictured above with Colchester Mayor Cllr Tim Young at the opening) says: “This project demonstrates WMTC’s commitment to making West Mersea an accessible and inclusive place for residents and visitors. It shows what can be achieved when councils work together. This specialist facility will enable many more disabled people and their families and friends to enjoy a day at Mersea beach.”

If you have any queries or comments, please contact West Mersea Town Council: info@westmersea.org