

Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) News

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The Next Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Ensuring Success

16th May saw over 70 people coming together in Huntingdon, representing interested parties from the Eastern area. This Defra-led event included a presentation from Sara Eppel, Head of their Rural Communities Policy Unit, along with presentations highlighting experiences from the last round of funding. The purpose of the event was to collect the views of the attendees about experiences from the last round of funding and opinions with regard to priorities for any future RDPE funding. All attendees will shortly be sent a link to enable them to access the presentations and feedback from the group sessions.

Economic

Culture Secretary announces strategy to increase tourism spending in Britain

On 30th April 2013 the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport launched VisitBritain's long term tourism growth strategy for Britain. This ambitious [strategy](#) -- aims to attract 40 million international visitors a year, spending £31.3 billion, by 2020.

Rural Statistics

On 8th May Defra released rural statistics relating to [rural expenditure](#), [enterprise and business](#) and workplace and residence placed [earnings](#).

Three sites put forward for new River Thames crossing

On 21st May the government announced information regarding the three proposed sites for the [River Thames crossing](#) between Essex and Kent. Option A is the site of the existing Dartford to Thurrock crossing, option B would connect the A2 with the A1089, while option C would join the M2 in Kent with the A13 and M25 in Essex. A [public consultation](#) on the three options will run until 16 July with the results announced in the autumn.

Universities and Growth: The Witty Review - A call for evidence your chance to comment

As a result of the [Heseltine Review](#) the government asked Sir Andrew Witty to lead a review into how universities can drive economic growth in their area. Now Sir Andrew Witty is keen to know what you think and is asking you to **reply by 31st May 2013**. Please reply by E Mail to universitiesandgrowth@bis.gsi.gov.uk the Report findings will be presented to the government in the summer to ensure that they can inform LEP strategic plans and EU investment plans. Further information on Sir Andrew Witty's review can be found [here](#).

Communities

Community infrastructure levy guidance

On 25th April 2013 the updated [guidance](#) was released setting out the main procedures local authorities need to follow when introducing and operating the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Timetable CPC training, minibus drivers told

Members who drive buses or minibuses with more than eight seats as part of their work are reminded that the deadline to complete 35 hours of Continued Professional Competence training is September 9 2013. If you drive a lorry of 3.5 tonnes or more you have until September 9 2014. If you drive both, you'll only need to complete the training once, but you must meet the September 2013 cut-off if you wish to continue to drive minibuses commercially. The DSA has issued [new guidance](#) on the requirements.

Community Shops Fortnight 15th to 29th June 2013

This is the second annual Community Shops fortnight where last year over 100 shops took part. Community shops can obtain packs including bunting and rosettes that they can use to promote their enterprise. For more information regarding examples of the type of activities community shops undertook last year look at [The Plunkett Foundation](#)'s website.

Environment

Water testing gets underway to prevent beaches failing tough new standards

Testing gets underway in England's bathing waters from May 15th to improve water quality and protect England's £3.6 billion seaside tourist economy. The Environment Agency (EA) is asking local authorities, homeowners and farmers to do more to improve [bathing waters](#) across the country. EA analysis suggests that ten per cent (around 55) of England's beaches could be at risk of failing new, tighter standards that come into force in 2015. Beaches classed as 'poor' will be required to display a sign advising visitors not to swim there. The EA has also created a website application (known as a [widget](#)) to help other organisations, such as local authorities, tourist boards, tourist attractions and individuals display the latest bathing water data. The widget can be embedded into any website, enabling organisations to display the latest data from one or more bathing waters in their area.

Neonicotinoid pesticide restrictions will have significant impacts

The European Commission will put in place stringent restrictions on the use of [neonicotinoid pesticides](#), which some researchers have linked to bee deaths, following a 15 to 8 vote of EU member states. For a two-year period from December, farmers will be unable to buy or sow treated seeds of crops deemed attractive to bees. "The decision is likely to have significant impacts for food production and unintended consequences for the environment, without delivering any measurable benefits for bee health," said the NFU's Dr Chris Hartfield.

Sheep vaccine approved

A vaccine to protect sheep and cattle from a virus spread by midges was approved by government vets on the 21st May 2013. [The Schmallenberg virus](#), which emerged in the Netherlands and Germany in 2011, can lead to sheep and cattle having stillborn or deformed offspring. The disease has spread to every county in England and Wales, and was recently reported in Scotland. Schmallenberg virus (SBV) causes fever, diarrhoea and loss of milk production in adult cattle. The first SBV vaccine, developed by the animal health company Merck MSD, is expected to be available to UK farmers in the summer.

Other News

Fresh meat sales hitch ride on 'horsegate'

On the 26th April the NFU reported that consumers are increasingly buying fresh beef and lamb rather than ready meals, according to the [latest figures](#) from Kantar Worldpanel. In the four weeks to 14th April, volume sales of fresh lamb were up 26.3% and fresh beef up 10%, compared to the same period last year.

Dates for your diary

10th June 2013	Community Action Group Meeting , RCCE Offices, 10:00am (coffee from 9.45am)
24th July 2013	Full ERP Meeting and Steering Group Meeting (venue and time t.b.c.)
20th August 2013	Community Action Group Meeting , RCCE Offices, 10:00am (coffee from 9.45am)

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