

COMMUNITIES URGE GOVERNMENT TO MAINTAIN VITAL RURAL FUNDING



The government has been warned not to withdraw vital funding from rural communities as the UK prepares to leave the European Union. The Rural Services Network issued the warning amid growing concern that government ministers are considering withdrawing funding for important rural projects. Despite a government pledge to honor EU structural and investment projects signed before the Autumn Statement, doubts remain over funding

for rural projects agreed after that date.

Although the government promised to maintain the current level of EU subsidies paid direct to farmers until 2020, it has failed to make a similar guarantee regarding other rural payments. EU rural development and LEADER funding has supported village shops, rural tourism, rural services, green energy and rural cultural and heritage activity. The Rural Services Network believes that sparsely populated and isolated rural communities, including those in remote areas, will be particularly hard hit if funding is withdrawn.

To read the full article please click [here](#)

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE AT RHS GARDEN HYDE HALL



With so much of the country's traditional woodland destroyed, it's crucial that we not only protect what little we have left, but that we also do everything we can to turn back the clock and restore as much woodland as we can to its former glory.

Over the last 20 years, RHS Garden Hyde Hall, near Chelmsford, has embarked upon an extensive tree planting program with around 60,000 trees planted. While some of the planting is still young, most of the areas open for walking are at least 15 years old, enabling you to enjoy a pleasant circular stroll around the 360-acre estate which surrounds the main ornamental garden.

Wildflowers, mosses, fungi and lichens have begun to colonise, and the burgeoning wildlife population is much in evidence, both in sight and sound. The once barren, arable wasteland has been transformed into a living, breathing wildwood. As the seasons change, so the woodland flora will change from pretty cowslips in early spring, to bluebells in April and May, and towering foxgloves and common spotted orchids, which have only recently started to return to the garden, in the summer months. If you haven't got a tree in your own garden it is well worth considering one. There's plenty to choose from, whatever size of garden you have and as we head into autumn it's the perfect time to start thinking about it.

You'll find lots of help and advice on the RHS website please [click here](#)

Source: Sue Carter (RHS)

ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PLAN – CONSULTATION



The new draft Police and Crime Plan for Essex is now available for consultation. Organisations and individuals are encouraged to read the draft and to respond with their feedback. The Plan sets out the seven priorities for Policing: More local, visible and accessible policing; Crack down on anti – social behaviour; Be tough on domestic abuse; Reverse the trend in serious violence; Tackle gangs and organised crime; Protect children and vulnerable people from harm; *and* Improve safety on our roads.

The draft Plan can be found [here](#) and responses can be made by either completing the online survey, by e-mailing the PCC for Essex at policeandcrimeplan2016@essex.pnn.police.uk or by writing to the PCC for Essex at 3 Hoffmans Way, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1GU. The Police and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, will be presenting the draft Plan at the next Essex Rural Partnership meeting on 30th September.

STATE OF NATURE 2016: GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO HELPING UK'S WILDLIFE



Environment Minister Andrea Leadsom offers hope to conservationists as State of Nature 2016 report reveals “a severe loss of nature” in the UK since 1970. Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Andrea Leadsom used her speech at the launch of the State of Nature 2016 in London to commit the Government to improving natural habitats and reversing species declines with a long-term plan for the environment. The State of Nature 2016 is a wide-ranging report into the health of the UK’s wildlife and reveals serious declines across at least 56% per cent of species since 1970. Responding to the findings Andrea Leadsom spoke of her “very big ambition to lead the first generation [of politicians] to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.”

Addressing the concerns of conservationists present about the recent Brexit vote and uncertainties over key EU conservation directives, Leadsom spoke of publishing “a new framework for nature” in the near future, to replace that currently enshrined in EU law. She also committed the Government to a 25-year plan for the environment while also defending the recent record of farmers in protecting wildlife, particularly through agri-environmental schemes. One of the reports key findings was that “policy-driven agricultural changes was by far the most significant driver of wildlife declines”. Leadsom accepted the invitation from fellow speaker Trevor Dines (Plantlife) to work in partnership with the conservation NGOs “reverse the quiet catastrophe in our countryside”. Dines dismissed the idea of Britain being a green and pleasant land, quoting the loss of 97% of wildflower meadows to create improved pasture: “where once there were wildflowers there is now a factory floor”.

Broadcaster and writer Iolo Williams was not convinced and questioned the Secretary of State's commitment to and knowledge of the environment in a panel session later in the morning. He called for ministers for the environment to “demonstrate expertise” and have a “proper understanding of the environment” and “not simply see the job as a step on the career ladder”.

Source - Countryfile News

WELCOME CHANGES TO THE TESCOS BAGS OF HELP SCHEME



Grants are awarded to voluntary or community organisations (including registered charities/companies), schools, Parish/Town Councils and local authorities, health bodies (e.g. Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), NHS Hospital Trust, Foundation Trust), and social housing providers. (This list is not exhaustive and there will be many other types of organization's that will be funded.)

In order to give Tesco customers a say much more frequently on where their money goes, the Bags of Help scheme is now **permanently** open for applications.

There are also a number of other exciting **changes** to the scheme:

- Bags of Help will now see the money raised by the 5p bag charge in Tesco stores opened up to a greater range of projects that support community participation in the development and use of open spaces.
- As well as physical improvements of open spaces – such as building new pocket parks, sports facilities, woodland walks and community gardens – projects that will now get the green light as a result of the funding will include volunteer training, equipment purchases, community events and sports and leisure activities.
- Following a public vote, three projects in each region will now receive a grant each month, with first place receiving up to £5,000, second place up to £2,000 and third place up to £1,000. Please note the maximum amount you can now apply for is £5,000. Previously awarded grants are unaffected by these changes to the scheme.

Please apply yourself or spread this exciting news and encourage others to apply or nominate a project.

Find out more and apply on the dedicated Bags of Help website please click [here](#)

If you have questions that aren't answered by the information on the website, or you'd like some extra support, feel free to get in touch with your local Community Enabler:

Victoria Rudd, Enabler for Essex, on 07736 132873 or victoria.rudd@groundwork.org.uk

AVOIDING THE RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLIFF



Unemployment is falling, but many people are struggling. What can we do to help those people missing out on employment opportunities? And how can we make sure no one is left behind?

The 'employment rate' is measured using the Labour Force Survey and is defined as the proportion of people aged 16-64 years in work. 'Unemployed people' are defined as those without a job who have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks. This definition also includes people who are out of work but have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks. Figures published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show the UK's unemployment rate fell to 4.9% in the three months to the end of June, marking the lowest it has been since September 2005.

According to the statistics there were 1.64 million people out of work – 52,000 fewer than in the previous quarter and 207,000 fewer year-on-year; with 31.8 million in work, 172,000 more than from January until March this year. Over the same April to June 2016 period, the rate of total pay increased by 2.4%.

While many view these figures as encouraging, others wonder if they mask increases in the number of self-employed people who are barely scrapping a living or workers accepting lower wages or working fewer hours.

In a rural context, the figures do not always take account of 'job jugglers', people who have more than one work (some if it seasonal, temporary or part time leading to low pay) or people out of work and trying to get by without seeking support from Jobcentre Plus and DWP.

To read the full article by Jessica Sellick please [click here](#)

MOBILE PHONE OPERATORS SHOULD BE LEGALLY OBLIGED TO DELIVER UNIVERSAL COVERAGE ACROSS THE WHOLE OF BRITAIN, SAY RURAL BUSINESS LEADERS



The call comes after MPs debated the Digital Economy Bill, which sets out provisions for a new legal right to superfast broadband for all home and business premises by 2020. The Bill does not include a similar commitment to universal coverage for mobile across the whole of the UK, says the Country Land and Business Association. But it does contain major legal concessions to mobile companies which will result in a £1 billion saving for the industry.

CLA eastern region Director Ben Underwood suggested that the Bill failed to adequately reflect the needs of rural businesses and communities. "Mobile devices are a vital part of modern life, and can transform the opportunities for people who live and work across our countryside," he said.

"That potential continues to be stifled because of poor and inconsistent coverage. The promise of this Bill is to improve coverage now and in the future, but it is flawed." The proposed law was extremely weak in terms of what it obliged the mobile industry to deliver, said Mr Underwood. The CLA was calling on MPs to ensure that any benefits to mobile operators from the law were fully transferred to consumers, he added, especially those in rural areas.

"A universal coverage target for mobile, complementary to the commitment for universal superfast broadband already contained in this Bill, is the best way to achieve this. See also please [click here](#)

RCCE 2016 VILLAGE HALLS & COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONFERENCE



RCCE is holding its annual Village Halls & Community Buildings Conference on Saturday 15th October 2016 at The Silver Jubilee Hall, Takeley. The event will take place from 9.30am to 3pm in the newly refurbished and modernised village hall in the centre of Takeley.

RCCE welcome Uttlesford DC staff who will give a presentation on Emergency Planning for Village Halls; and Doddnaze Artists will provide advice on engaging musicians and performers and holding gigs and fundraising events. Voluntary Sector Training will highlight the training courses available to support trustees and managers of community facilities; and a representative from Celotex Insulation will talk about the benefits and different types of insulation for halls.

A highlight of the day will be the launch of Superfast Essex Broadband's new initiative, The Community Broadband Scheme to connect halls and hubs to broadband. RCCE also welcome a presentation on behalf of Essex County Councils Community Initiatives Fund.

RCCE welcome members and non-members who own or manage community facilities to attend.

The booking form, fees and conference programme including directions can be found [here](#)

NALC WARNS PARISH CAPPING WILL DAMAGE COMMUNITIES

The government is planning to bring in new rules forcing local councils to hold costly local referendums over increases to the parish precepts.

These proposals labelled as “a centralist sledgehammer to crack a nut” by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) which will “damage communities and local services as well as undermining the role of local councillors”.

The national body represents England’s 10,000 local councils and over 80,000 councillors and had issued this stark warning ahead of a consultation on local government finance which was expected to be published on Thursday 15th September by local government minister Marcus Jones MP. The consultation paper from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) makes proposals to bring local councils in line with principal councils by requiring them to hold a referendum if they plan to increase their part of council tax above a certain amount, with the effect of introducing ‘capping’ for the first time. The limit for principal councils – who spend around £100 billion a year – is currently 2%, with an additional 2% recently introduced to allow them to generate new income for social care costs. In many cases the costs of holding a local referendum to ask local people if they support an increase in parish spending will run well into thousands of pounds, often wiping out the proposed increase. Unlike principal councils, local councils do not receive grant funding from central government or a share of business rates and are primarily financed through the parish precept.

For the full article please [click here](#)

EALC AGM AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The EALC held their AGM and annual conference on Thursday 22nd September, the event included speakers; Cllr Kevin Bentley Deputy Leader of ECC, Police and Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst, Chief Constable Stephen Kavanagh and Tim Morris of Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.



The following awards were amongst the many presented:-

Vaughtons Council of the Year: Witham Town Council

Runner-up: West Hanningfield Parish Council

Highly Commended: Hullbridge Parish Council

Full details of all awards will be available shortly on the [EALC website](#)

GIVE NATURE A HOME IN YOUR GARDEN



The RSPB want to inspire everyone to give nature a home. They believe if we all do a little bit, we can achieve amazing things. So no matter whether you have a few flowerpots, a balcony or a big garden, the RSPB have got activities to suit you. What will you try first?

To get started please click [here](#)

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