

A VISION FOR ESSEX – HOW YOU CAN HELP SHAPE OUR SHARED FUTURE



In the future Essex will look very different but we want to make sure it remains the county we all love. This is why a shared Vision for Essex is being created by partners – businesses, the voluntary sector, schools, universities and other public service partners. Embracing the future, the vision will be an expression of shared pride about what makes Essex a great place, as well as some of the things that currently hold us back. And you are part of that journey.

Essex is going to change considerably over the next 15 to 20 years and public services must work closely with a range of partners to meet these challenges.

So the vision aims to create:

- A story promoting our county on the national and international stage
- A framework for stronger collaboration
- A set of priorities we can all aspire to achieve together

The Essex Partnership Board is leading the work to ensure we have a clear focus as the vision develops and everyone who has a stake in the future of Essex is urged to help shape it. So far, about 2,000 people have been engaged, including senior public service leaders and over 1,000 members of the public, ensuring a broad and inclusive cross-section of society is represented.

Emerging themes and challenges from the engagement so far highlight:

- Diversity is a defining feature of Essex
- People are proud of being from Essex but feel it has an image problem
- Economic growth is a priority, but not everywhere
- Our transport infrastructure needs improvement
- Despite a strong can-do spirit, we fail to meet our economic potential
- Our natural and cultural heritage are our greatest assets, but are undervalued
- An ageing population presents both challenges and opportunities

A draft vision, based on this feedback, is now being produced and will be discussed at an inaugural Essex Assembly event, bringing together a wide range of partners across the public, private and community sectors in Essex to discuss what the draft will look like and how to make it a reality.

For more information and to contribute to the emerging ideas, please visit the [Vision for Essex website](#)

FUNDING TO BOOST THE RURAL ECONOMY – STILL OPEN!



Since it started in 2016 the Eastern Plateau rural grant programme has had an eventful year! After securing £1.5m of European funding through the LEADER Programme to support local farmers, businesses and community groups to access funding to create jobs and benefit the rural economy the Programme team had to manage the uncertainty around Brexit. However, this didn't seem to deter a wide range of good projects coming forward and 2016 finished with 12 projects supported and £350,000 of grants allocated.

With confirmation from the government that funding will be guaranteed for projects that are agreed and contracted before the UK's departure from the EU now is the time to get in contact if you have a potential project.

The minimum grant that can be applied for is £2,500 and maximum grant amount could be up to €200,000. Grants will typically be limited to a maximum of 40% of the project's total eligible costs.

Examples of grants awarded so far include:-

- Forestry equipment to manage under utilised woodland areas in the Eastern Plateau area
- Construction of a new community and sports pavilion
- Sheep handling equipment
- Development of new kitchen facilities
- Capital equipment for manufacturing company
- Construction of outdoor exhibition space

The Eastern Plateau LEADER is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

Projects can be considered if they meet the following Eastern Plateau LEADER priorities:-

- Increase farm productivity
- Support micro and small businesses and farm diversification
- Boost rural tourism
- Provide rural services
- Provide culture and heritage activities: and
- Increase forestry productivity

The rural areas of Epping Forest, Uttlesford, East Herts and North Herts are covered by the Eastern Plateau.

More information can be found at www.easternplateau.org.uk or contact the Programme Team on 01992 531618.

'PATCHY' SERVICES BLIGHT COMMUNITIES



Rural communities are suffering due to the patchy provision of key services, a major report has warned. Transport, education, health and welfare services that act as a lifeline to more than 9m rural people are patchy – and many are fast diminishing, says the study. Published on Tuesday 17th January, the State of [Rural Services 2016 report](#) highlights the contraction of rural public and private sector provision in England. More than three fifths of pupils in England's rural areas cannot reach a secondary school by public transport or on foot in a "reasonable" travel time, says the study.

Meanwhile, only 30% of village households are within 2.5 miles of a bank or building society. Rural residents are also less likely to have access to medical support and face greater challenges accessing further education and welfare services.

Margaret Clark, who chairs Rural England's stakeholder group, described the report's findings as "worrying" across transport, education, social care and retail services.

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

'MORE HELP NEEDED FOR RURAL SHOPS'



THE government is facing calls to help secure the future of thousands of rural shops. Campaigners say action is needed so 19,128 rural shops can continue to provide essential services. Many village stores double up as the local Post Office for rural customers who would otherwise be isolated. Rural shops are often the only place where customers in their local area can get essential goods and services. More than half of rural stores (59%) operate entirely on their own, with no other retail/service businesses close by, according to the Rural Shop Report 2017 by the Association of Convenience Stores. Village shops are often at the heart of the community, with one in five store owners in rural areas having run their store for over 25 years. Rural shop owners also work long hours to serve their local area, with 22% working more than 70 hours per week and 21% taking no holiday at all throughout the year.

Recommendations to Government include producing a dedicated plan to ensure the government keeps its manifesto pledge to sustain 3,000 rural post offices.

Over the past ten years, there have been over 1,500 Post Office closures in rural areas.

To continue reading please click [here](#)

FEARS FOR FARMING AS UK PREPARES TO QUIT EU SINGLE MARKET



Farm leaders say agriculture must not be sacrificed as the UK seeks free-trade deal when it leaves the EU. Industry leaders were speaking after Prime Minister Theresa May confirmed on 17th January that the UK would leave the EU single market. In a speech setting out her Brexit plan, Mrs May also ruled out the UK's membership of the EU customs union – instead stating her intention to pursue a free-trade agreement with the EU. Doing so would enable the UK to control immigration, she said.

Market access

NFU president Meurig Raymond said: "The important thing for British farming is that we have access into that European market free of tariffs and free of any non-tariff barriers."

British farming underpinned the country's food and drink sector, said Mr Raymond. It was worth £110bn to the national economy. "The prime minister has set out a very ambitious plan.

"I would hope that the negotiators on the other side of the water will recognise that a bad trade deal for the UK will not help either the UK or the European Union in the longer term."

Strategic importance

Farming was of vital strategic importance for the country for food production, driving the economy and also managing Britain's landscapes, environment and natural resources. It was vital that a post-Brexit Britain worked for everyone – which must include the agricultural sector, said Mr Raymond.

In a statement, the NFU's ruling council said it welcomed Mrs May's acknowledgement that access to a reliable workforce from overseas was vital for many British industries. This was especially so for agriculture and the NFU looked forward to that acknowledgement being turned into a commitment which was then acted on.

The NFU was now seeking urgent talks with the government as to how a post-Brexit Britain could work for UK food production, said Mr Raymond.

Source Farmersweekly – click [here](#) for further information

'DOWN AND ANXIOUS' - WHEN LONELINESS HITS



A cross-party commission of MPs is investigating loneliness in the UK, which it says is an epidemic affecting people of all ages and backgrounds. Here, two young women share their stories.

In 2010 Molly Forbes had her first child, Freya. But after the birth she was confronted with something she had not prepared for: loneliness.

A "sociable person", Molly - then 26 - was one of the first of her friends to have a baby.

Her husband was out at work all day and she did not have any close family living by.

"The loneliness of being a new mother was a real surprise for me. It just hit me," she said.

"You're suddenly at home with a baby. You feel safer there so you stay home - but it makes you more isolated.

"When you go out, you want to be seen to be doing a good job and being happy. If you admit you're lonely, you might be labelled as not coping."

The commission - set up by West Yorkshire Labour MP Jo Cox before she was murdered last June - says a fifth of the population privately admit they are "always or often lonely". But two-thirds of those would never confess to having a problem in public, it says.

Molly, from Devon, said that rather than being honest about how she was feeling, she had "put a brave face on - and that can make you more lonely". "Looking back, I was definitely feeling quite anxious. "I was worrying about money, about whether I'd go back to my job - and when you don't have someone to talk to, these worries can spiral out of control."

Molly had lots of friends, but found she couldn't talk to them about her post-baby concerns. That was when she started writing a blog. "I made connections with other mums online, and from there I started meeting up with people and found friends that way."

The commission says three-quarters of people who are lonely on a regular basis do not know where to turn for support. It is looking for practical solutions to beat loneliness.

Who is feeling lonely?

- Parents - Action for Children found 24% of parents surveyed were always or often lonely
- Teenagers - 62% are 'sometimes lonely' and one in 20 never spend time with friends at weekends
- Carers - 8 out of 10 carers have felt lonely or isolated as a result of looking after a loved one
- Refugees and migrants - 58% of those surveyed in London cited loneliness and isolation as their biggest challenge
- The elderly - 1 in 3 people aged 75 and over say that feelings of loneliness are out of their control
- The deafblind charity Sense has said that up to half of disabled people will be lonely on any given day

BBC News article – to read on please click [here](#)

FULL ERP FUTURE MEETING DATES 2017

Date: Wednesday 24th May 2017

Time: 2pm – 5pm

Location: The Young Farmers Centre, Whitbreads Barn, Chatham Green, Chelmsford CM3 3LQ

Date: Monday 25th September 2017

Time: 2pm – 5pm

Location: TBC

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