

ERP News

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Rural Network meets for the first time

ERP Chairman Councillor John Jowers represented the ERP at the first meeting of [Defra's Rural and Farming Network](#) on 17th April. The ERP was one of 14 bodies to be awarded a seat, with a further three welcomed to the network just in time for the meeting. Councillor Jowers gave a report at the full Partnership meeting on 2nd May, details of which are included in the minutes (circulated shortly).

Essex has great potential

There was a varied agenda at the latest full Partnership meeting held at The Reid Rooms on 2nd May. Amanda Lumley from Visit Essex talked about what the organisation is doing to grow tourism in Essex and Sam Fry from Essex County Council spoke about the various initiatives in place to ensure a lasting legacy for Essex from the 2012 Olympics. Richard Colley gave an interesting insight into Harwich Connexions, a social enterprise company that runs a number of schemes to benefit the local community and economy. The presentations are available to download [here](#).

Economic

Chelmsford in the running for ultrafast broadband funding

Chelmsford is one of 27 cities eligible to bid for a share of £50m to help roll-out [ultrafast broadband](#), driving new growth and investment, Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced. This is the second round of funding, which can only be used to support the roll-out of ultrafast broadband in areas that will not be served by the private sector.

Rural economy remains 'fragile'

Investment in rural and agricultural businesses may be reduced over the next 12 months, a new survey by the [CLA](#) and Smiths Gore has found. The Rural Economy Index looked at more than 100 businesses in the countryside during the first quarter of 2012 and found that, while sales remain stable or higher, lower levels of investment remain a real concern for more than a quarter of both businesses types.

Communities

Village Agents secures funding until 2013

The Essex [Village Agents](#) Project has been extended until 31st March 2013. The sign-posting service for people in rural communities has been extended to enable a full, long-term plan to be devised and implemented.

Villages becoming 'wealthy ghettos'

Efforts to preserve a 'picture postcard' countryside are turning villages into 'wealthy ghettos', a [rural housing](#) expert claims. Mark Shucksmith, professor of planning at Newcastle University, said that rising house prices were excluding poorer people from the countryside and that affordable housing was essential to the vitality and sustainability of rural areas. Average house prices in rural areas exceed those in urban areas of England by around 25%, he said.

New guidance on renewable energy for communities

A new [topic sheet](#) that explains how communities can gain ownership of their own energy supply and generate income for new projects has been published by ACRE and the Centre for Sustainable Energy. The topic sheet introduces renewable energy and explains how this can be considered as part of a Community Led Plan.

'Fantastic response' to Portas Pilots

Hundreds of towns across the country have applied to become one of the first [Portas Pilots](#) to breathe new life into their high streets, Local Government Minister Grant Shapps announced. The Government received 371 bids to become one of 12 Portas Pilots, with a chance to receive a share of £1.2m. The results of the competition will be announced this month, and a second round of pilots has now been launched.

Environment

Help your garden grow for free

Essex residents can pick up some free compost courtesy of [Essex County Council](#) to celebrate Compost Awareness Week (6-12th May). The giveaway takes place in the Discovery Centre at Great Notley Country Park on Saturday 12th May, 10am until 3pm.

Cattle controls strengthened to help eradicate bovine TB

New measures to help stop the spread of [bovine TB](#) will come into force on 1st July as part of the Government's plan to eradicate the disease. Amendments to cattle movements and changes to compensation policy, including reduced payments for owners of TB affected herds with overdue tests, will be included as a part of the package of measures.

Other News

RCCE launches new oil bulk-buying scheme

Residents in Essex can save on the cost of their heating oil by joining a new county-wide bulk-buying scheme set up by [Rural Community Council of Essex](#) (RCCE). The scheme brings communities together to harness the joint buying power so that savings can be made and passed on to customers. RCCE is also looking to recruit local coordinators to gather orders from members in their village.

Great British cucumber celebrated

Waltham Abbey is marking National Cucumber Day by hosting [The Great British Cucumber Festival](#) on Saturday 12th May. Live music and dance, children's activities and the famous cucumber relay race are just some of the activities organised to raise both money for local charities and awareness of our local salad industry.

Dates for your diary

30th May	Community Action Group meeting , RCCE Offices, Feering , 10:00am
15th June	ERP Steering Group meeting , RCCE Offices, Feering , 10:00am (<i>Steering Group members only</i>)
31st July	10 Year Anniversary Full ERP meeting , Channels Golf Club, Chelmsford , 9:30am – 3:00pm
29th August	ERP Steering Group meeting , RCCE Offices, Feering , 10:00am (<i>Steering Group members only</i>) Community Action Group meeting , RCCE Offices, Feering , 2:30pm
14th September	EERF meeting , venue TBC, 9:30am – 1:00pm
10th October	Full ERP meeting , venue TBC, 9:30am – 1:00pm Steering Group meeting after lunch at 2:00pm (<i>Steering Group members only</i>)
19th December	ERP Steering Group meeting , RCCE Offices, Feering , 10:00am (<i>Steering Group members only</i>)
30th January 2013	EERF meeting , venue TBC, 9:30am – 1:00pm

This newsletter is produced and sent by Rural Community Council of Essex on behalf of the Essex Rural Partnership. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in future please email info@essexruralpartnership.org.uk with 'unsubscribe' as the email subject.

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