

## Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) News

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### ERP welcomes Rural Statement

Defra's much anticipated [Rural Statement](#) has been published with a focus on economic growth, rural engagement and quality of life. The ERP has written a short [response](#), welcoming the commitment to improved broadband and mobile connectivity, encourage more affordable housing and enable fairer access to services in rural areas.

## Economic

### FSB launch SME Awards

The first ever [FSB Streamline Awards](#) to highlight the importance of small businesses, reward excellence and celebrate their success has been launched. Entrants will be grouped into one of 12 geographical areas and there are four categories businesses can enter. The closing date for entries is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012.

### Broadband fit for rural growth

The Country Land and Business association (CLA) has published its vision for the future of broadband in rural areas to mark 10 years of lobbying. '[Broadband fit for rural growth](#)' also calls for a strategic alliance with other interested groups to further influence the rural broadband debate.

## Communities

### Stop-the-clock powers for communities

New powers for communities to prevent the rapid sell-off of valuable community assets have been introduced by Communities Minister Don Foster. The [Community Right to Bid](#), under the Localism Act, allows communities to 'stop-the-clock' on the sale of local assets such as post offices and pubs, giving them time to put in a takeover bid and protect it for the wider community's benefit.

### Community transport 'vital'

A new [report](#) that highlights the vital role community transport plays in enabling people to access services has been published by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England). The report makes comparisons between rural and urban areas, emphasizing the reduced public transport options in rural areas.

### Rural schools face funding challenge

A shakeup in Government funding could lead to the closure of [schools in rural areas](#), fear campaigners. Councils must now consider 11 factors such as deprivation, special educational needs and numbers of children

when designing the 'funding formula' that calculates how much individual schools receive. Previously local authorities were free to choose from a range of 37 factors allowing some flexibility, including an 'additional funding allowance' to protect small schools.

## Environment

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### What's your view on woodland creation?

The [Forestry Commission](#) and Natural England would like your views on potential woodland creation in the landscapes you know. The information will be used to help identify where there may be opportunities to meet aspirations for more woodland. Deadline for responses is Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October.

## Other News

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### Edible Essex launches schools competition

A new competition aimed at encouraging healthy eating and the growing of fruit and vegetables has been launched for Essex primary schools. The '[Packed Lunch Plot](#)' competition invites children to plan what they could grow in a small allotment and invent a recipe for a healthy packed lunch using the produce.

### Big Assist calls for suppliers to register

The [Big Assist Programme](#) is calling on organisations with quality experience of supporting the voluntary sector to register as Assist Suppliers. Suppliers who apply prior to 15 October 2012 will be submitted to the first meeting of an Independent Review Panel, which is scheduled for the week beginning 22 October 2012.

## Dates for your diary

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|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 <sup>th</sup> October      | <b>Full ERP meeting</b> , Foakes Hall, Great Dunmow, 10:00am<br><b>Steering Group meeting</b> after lunch at 2:00pm ( <i>Steering Group members only</i> ) |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> October      | <b>RCCE Village Halls &amp; Community Buildings Conference</b> , Highwood Village Hall, 9:30am – 3:00pm                                                    |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> November      | <b>Community Action Group visit to Highwood Catch-up Café</b> , <a href="#">Highwood Village Hall</a> , 11:00am                                            |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> December     | <b>ERP Steering Group meeting</b> , <a href="#">RCCE Offices</a> , <a href="#">Feering</a> , 10:00am ( <i>Steering Group members only</i> )                |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2013 | <b>EERF meeting</b> , NFU Office, Newmarket, 9:30am – 12:00pm ( <i>EERF Members only</i> )                                                                 |

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