

Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) News

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ERP discusses with Richard Benyon MP what matters to rural Essex



On Tuesday 19th June, Essex Rural Partnership welcomed Richard Benyon MP, *Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs*, to Brightlingsea. A small group of representatives from ERP discussed with the Minister, and officers from Defra, issues of current importance to Essex. Issues raised included EU Structural Funds, CAP reform implementation, campaign for the farmed environment, fisheries quotas and regionalisation, localism, community rights and permitted development, regional flood and coastal committees and broadband.

Economic

Launch of Community Energy Strategy - Call for Evidence

Initiatives focused on reducing, managing, generating or purchasing energy are on the rise in the UK and the Government believes that it has the potential to achieve much more. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) want to hear from everyone with an interest in community energy. Responses to the Call for Evidence are sought from all stakeholders including the public. Responses are encouraged via the online consultation system [Citizen Space](#). The Consultation is open now and runs until 1st August 2013. To underpin the Community Energy Strategy, this Call for Evidence seeks data in three areas: benefits, barriers, and solutions. The Government will publish a Community Energy Strategy later in the year.

Agriculture in the United Kingdom - 2012

On 6th June the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) produced their annual [publication](#) providing an overview of agriculture in the UK. It contains an extensive range of data including farm incomes, land use, livestock numbers, prices, production of key commodities (e.g. wheat, milk, and vegetables), overseas trade, organic farming and the environment.

Britain's wheat harvest hit by poor weather

[Britain's wheat harvest](#) this year could be almost 30% smaller than it was last year due to extreme weather, the National Farmers' Union has warned. Figures in April have already revealed the area planted with winter wheat was down by a quarter on the previous year. A poll carried out by the NFU suggested that wheat production would be below average for the second year in a row.

Communities

Localism and Neighbourhood Planning Conference – 24th October 2013

This conference at the Royal Agricultural University Cirencester will explore changes to planning following the Localism Act 2011 and National Planning Policy Framework, with a particular focus on Neighbourhood Planning. Speakers will include the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). The full day conference will cost £60, with the programme being available in due course. For more information please email localism.conference@rau.ac.uk

Guide to assist with local government transparency

On 14th June the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) produced a guide entitled "[Your council's cabinet: going to its meetings, seeing how it works](#)". This guide provides the public with practical information about attending meetings of a council's executive and obtaining council documents. It is part of DCLG's policy regarding making local councils more transparent and accountable to local people. It should also help councillors and officers to comply with rules which are based on a presumption in favour of openness.

Environment

10% of UK wildlife 'endangered'

A stocktake of UK nature suggests 60% of animal and plant species studied have declined in the past 50 years. The State of Nature report, compiled by 25 wildlife organisations (from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to the British Lichen Society) collates assessments of 3,148 species. Species requiring specific habitats have fared particularly poorly compared to the generalists able to adapt to the country's changing environment. Turtle doves have declined by 93% since 1970 and hedgehogs have declined by around a third since the millennium. See the [full story](#)

Banned pesticides may be having wider environmental impacts

In December the European Union agreed to a two-year moratorium on the use of Neonicotinoid; the ban would only apply to crops and flowers that were attractive to bees, such as oilseed rape. A new report published on 13th June by Professor Dave Goulson of Sussex University indicates that this class of pesticides linked to the deaths of bees may also be harming other wildlife species; this latest review of the [scientific data](#) suggests the chemicals pose a risk to soil, water and grain-eating birds such as partridge and in his opinion we may have been missing the bigger picture by focusing too much on bees. To read more on this story follow [this link](#).

Other News

Essex Country Shows

The Essex Young Farmers Show and the Blackwater Show have already taken place, but there is still time to make plans to visit the Southend Robin Hood Country Show (6th and 7th July), the Tendring Show (13th July), and the Essex Country Show at Barleylands (14th and 15th September). More information on these shows can be found [here](#).

Dates for your diary

24th July 2013	Full ERP Meeting	Chelmsford City FC 10.00 am (Coffee from 9.45 am)
24th July 2013	ERP Steering Group Meeting	Chelmsford City FC 2.00pm (following Full ERP meeting)
20th August 2013	Community Action Group Meeting	RCCE Offices, 10.00am (Coffee from 9.45 am)

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