

Economic

Businesses and communities to unite for neighbourhood growth

Eight business groups have been given the opportunity to test proposals set out in the Localism Bill to develop business led neighbourhood plans that benefit the whole community. The [Business Neighbourhood Frontrunners](#) will work with local authorities and communities to prepare the planning and development framework that will attract the right sort of development to their area. Councils will then adopt these if they are later passed in a local referendum.

Farming red tape to be cut

[Agriculture Minister Jim Paice](#) has announced that work to cut bureaucracy in farming will start immediately, following recommendations made by the independent Farming Regulation Task Force. These include reducing paperwork required under the nitrate regulations and a move towards reporting all pig and cattle movement online. A new Strategic Regulation Scrutiny Panel has also been established to challenge and advise the Government on its approach to regulation.

Maldon "Thinks Local"

The Maldon "[Think Local](#)" campaign was officially launched on 21st May by Maldon MP, John Whittingdale. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the need to buy local to protect small independent shops and services in Maldon and the smaller market towns of Burnham-on-Crouch, Heybridge and Southminster. Local businesses supporting the campaign are displaying a "Think Local" logo and offering various incentives to shoppers as a reward for customer loyalty.

Communities

Cameron's plan to boost Big Society

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced proposals to encourage more volunteering and charitable giving in order to promote the [Big Society](#). Initiatives include the use of social networking sites and the option to donate money to charity through cash points and mobile phones. Government policies will also be scrutinised for social value as well as value for money. A White Paper will set out plans for more than £40 million additional support for the voluntary sector.

New powers to protect allotments

[New neighbourhood planning powers](#) that will give communities the means to boost the number of allotments and improve and protect existing sites are being trialed across the country. The powers are part of the new right for communities to create a neighbourhood plan, which is being introduced into the Localism

Bill. Furthermore, requirements for councils to provide allotments will be safeguarded as part of a wider review into reducing statutory duties on local authorities.

Protecting our playing fields

A new £10 million National Lottery fund to help protect and preserve playing fields across the country was launched on 11th May by Sport England and the Minister for Sport and the Olympics, Hugh Robertson MP. The [Protecting Playing Fields](#) programme, part of Sport England's Places People Play mass participation legacy, will fund up to 300 projects for playing fields improvements and developing community sport.

Real Ale Runabout

Colchester CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) and RCCE have announced the new 2011 programme for the [Real Ale Runabout](#). The scheme supports rural pubs in Colchester via a community minibus service that brings people out to the pubs that are difficult to access by public transport. Places must be booked in advance.

Dengie DaRT up and running

The [Dengie DaRT](#) Dial-a-Ride service was officially launched by Maldon MP, John Whittingdale on 18th May. Arrow Taxis, working in partnership with RCCE and Essex County Council, established the demand responsive transport (DRT) service to provide access to Broomfield Hospital for people living in the Maldon and Dengie area.

Village shop will return to "hub of the community"

The only remaining [village shop in Roxwell](#) has been awarded a £5, 000 grant from Essex County Council's Big Society Fund, which will enable it to return to "the hub of the community". The grant has been used to help modernise and refurbish the outlet, which reopened on 30th April after being closed for a year.

Environment

New proposals for realistic zero carbon homes

Housing Minister Grant Schapps has announced proposals that strike a realistic balance between delivering the [zero carbon homes](#) of the future and creating the right conditions for encouraging new homes to be built. The Government's proposals for the Zero Carbon Homes standard will set tough new regulations to ensure that new homes built from 2016 will not add to the country's carbon footprint. However these will be focused on fabric energy efficiency; house builders will not need to anticipate lifetime emissions of the property caused by the buyer.

Children missing out on growth opportunity

Children in more than half of our secondary schools are missing out because they don't grow their own fruit and veg, say a group of leading experts. The [Food Growing in Schools Task Force](#), which was launched by Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman at the Chelsea Flower Show on 23rd May, is led by Garden Organic and includes Blue Peter gardener Chris Collins and former England Rugby Union captain Lawrence Dallaglio. The Task Force will look at examples of schools that are already running schemes and the barriers preventing other schools from taking part.

Dishing out the dirt

Essex County Council is giving advice and support to residents on how they can make the most of their gardens this summer using [compost](#). The Council is also encouraging residents to take advantage of the “Buy One Get One Half Price” offer on compost bins or to buy a bag of soil improver available at recycling centres around the county. Green-fingered residents are also being invited to take part in a competition for the best home composting tip, with the chance of winning a Wooden Frame Composter or garden vouchers.

Other News

Edible Essex

RCCE is pleased to welcome Sophie Blythe as the new Project Manager for [Edible Essex](#). The project aims to establish and renovate orchards and allotments for community use across Essex by offering support and delivering training to Parish Councils and community groups.

Essex Village of the Year

Judging has begun for this year’s [Village of the Year and Best Kept Village competition](#). The competition, run by RCCE and supported by Essex and Suffolk Water, has had over 50 entries from all over Essex contending for the title of “Village of the Year” and the associated £500 prize. In addition to the top prize, second and third place prizes will be awarded and five classes for Best Kept Village are up for grabs. The winners will be announced at RCCE’s AGM at The Essex Golf and Country Club on 6th July.

New Thriving Third Sector film

A short film has been produced, that gives an overview of the processes involved in setting up and managing a voluntary group or organisation, including further sources of help and advice. The film was commissioned by Essex, Southend and Thurrock Infrastructure Consortium (ESTIC) and can be viewed [online](#).

“I love landscapes” Award winner announced

Shotley Cliff and Picnic Area near Ipswich has been voted the winner of the Haven Gateway Partnership’s [“I love landscapes”](#) Green Infrastructure Community Growth Award. The project will receive £18, 000 grant funding to help protect a section of woodland and restore a beautiful picnic area. The public were given the opportunity to vote for one of three projects to receive the funding, including a project in Colchester.

Dates for your diary

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| 21st June | Essex NextGen Roadshow , Three Rivers Golf & Country Club |
| 20th July | Full Essex Rural Partnership meeting, Writtle College |

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