



EUROPEAN FUNDING FOR RURAL AREAS

Following the 'Brexit' vote, the position with European funding streams has been somewhat uncertain. A public announcement made by Chancellor Philip Hammond on behalf of the Treasury on 13th August (which can be read [here](#)) confirmed continued funding for farmers under pillar one of the CAP. The same assurances do not apply to other funds under EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) (which includes LEADER). Funds already committed by contract (and those committed by the time of the Autumn Statement) to individual projects under LEADER and EAFRD are, however, guaranteed.

The situation is slowly becoming clearer and Government are now advising that things are 'business as usual'. The main European funds, however, are all operating under restrictions; but we are optimistic that this will change in the near future.

At the moment the message is that those with potential projects who wish to apply to these funds should continue to progress their project plans, and to talk to those managing the relevant fund(s). Whilst the future of the funds is not guaranteed it is widely expected that usual funding practices will resume after the Autumn Statement, and applicants are encouraged to be ready for these opportunities.

Read more about LEADER funding [here](#) and about EAFRD funding [here](#)

LOCAL BUS NETWORK REVIEW CONSULTATION – AUGUST 2016

Consultation has started and will finish on Wednesday 28th September 2016.



In 2015 Essex County Council (ECC) began a thorough review of its financial support for those local bus services that it pays for across the County. This consultation is the start of the second part of the review and looks at **70 services across Essex** where the current contract ends in 2017. We have grouped together services by geographical area of the County so it is easy to see whether your service is part of the review. Please take this opportunity to comment on your services. Services included are: Basildon, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping, Harlow and Uttlesford

Questionnaires will be available from:

- Essex CC Libraries
- Online: <https://surveys.essexinsight.org.uk/BusConsultation>
- By Phone: 03457 430 430

CALL TO SAFEGUARD RURAL POSTAL SERVICES



Postal deliveries to and from remote and sparsely populated areas must not be jeopardised, the rural services network (RSN) has warned.

The network issued the warning in its response to a review by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Government ministers are seeking views about postal services – in particular the Universal Service Obligation, which aims to protect deliveries and collections in smaller communities. The network said the government should use the review to reaffirm its commitment to postal deliveries to countryside communities.

Rural households and businesses were consistently receiving a six-day postal delivery to their home or premises, which arrived at an affordable and standard national price, it said. Homes and businesses were also continuing to benefit from the collection of mail six-days per week from post boxes and other collection points.

"As far as we are aware, this level of service is being delivered to rural communities," said the network. "We are not in receipt of evidence or local intelligence to the contrary."

The network said it did not believe that the "consumer experience" had altered in any fundamental way since the introduction of the 2011 Postal Services Act. The Act was introduced to provide for the restructuring of Royal Mail.

This included the sale of up to 90% of the company and provisions for a "special administrative regime" should the universal postal service be put at risk from insolvency proceedings.

The Rural Services Network said it was important that any proposed changes to the Act were "rural proofed" to ensure they weren't to the detriment of countryside communities.

For further reading please click [here](#)

COST OF RURAL CRIME TOPS £42M

The cost of rural crime rose to £42.5 million last year, reveal the latest findings from rural insurer NFU Mutual.

The 2015 figure represents a "disappointing" 0.4% increase on 2014 which itself was a drop in the annual cost of rural crime from £44.5m in 2013, said the company. "Every year, rural crime costs millions of pounds and causes untold anxiety across the UK," said an NFU Mutual spokesman. "While only costing slightly more than last year (0.4%) it is still disappointing as the cost in 2014 had reduced from that in 2013."

Despite little change overall, analysis of the figures shows there were still winners and losers in the war on rural crime regionally. The worst affected regions remain the North-East and East of England, where rural crime cost £7.9m and £6.9m respectively.

For the full article please click [here](#)

MPS LAUNCH RURAL TOURISM INQUIRY



An influential committee of MPs has launched an inquiry into the role of tourism in supporting rural growth in England. Rural tourism provides around £17 billion a year to the English economy. But rural communities face some particular challenges to tourism growth such as transport connections, restrictions to broadband access and seasonal employment. Now the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) select committee has launched an inquiry into how rural tourism can be supported. Committee chairman Neil Parish said: "Tourism in rural areas creates job opportunities and supports the economic viability of communities." MPs would examine how effectively public programmes and government policies support rural areas to stay competitive in a global industry, he added.

England has seen a rise in tourism spend in the past year from domestic and international visitors – but over half of the money spent by overseas tourists is in London. Figures by Visit England show that in 2014 just 18% of domestic overnight trips were taken to rural areas – down from 22% in 2012. The inquiry will examine how more people from at home and abroad can be encouraged to visit more of England's rural places, for longer and at all times of the year. It will look at ways to encourage farmers and rural residents to diversify into tourism and grow their businesses in the countryside.

Mr Parish said the committee wanted to ensure visitors' experiences were balanced with the need to preserve the environment and the character of local communities.

"We will also be asking how we can work to make the growth of countryside and coastal tourism sustainable, balancing economic, social and environmental interests."

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

WALK YOUR WAY AROUND OUR 'BOOTIFUL' COUNTY



Essex has hundreds of miles of gently rolling countryside with the longest coastline of any other county, and the best way to explore it all is on foot! Stroll through lovely villages, wander along meandering rivers or stride out along bracing sea walls. Whether you want to challenge yourself with the 81 mile Essex Way or start with something shorter there is something for everyone on the Essex walks booklist.

If you are also looking to find new walking routes that are easy to access and support sustainable tourism then you can download the guides for free on the Hundred Parishes Society website to use standalone or in conjunction with an Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map. The Hundred Parishes Society has created 20 walking routes that start and finish at railway stations. The self-guided routes range from 2 miles to 17 miles and offer an easy and enjoyable type of exercise to people with all levels of fitness. You'll be introduced to beautiful countryside and interesting historic villages and towns which make up part of the Hundred Parishes London - Cambridge railway line, including the area on the border of northwest Essex and Hertfordshire.

To access The Hundred Parishes Society website for walks please click [here](#)

CARRIER BAGS – KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

The number of plastic shopping bags handed out by retailers in England has dropped from seven billion to just over half a billion within six months, following the introduction of the 5p carrier bag charge last October.

More than seven billion plastic bags were handed out by England's seven major retailers in 2014, but this figure dropped to just over half a billion in the first six months after the 5p charge was introduced in October last year, Defra said.

Friends of the Earth's head of campaigns, Andrew Pendleton, added: "The plummeting plastic bag use demonstrates the huge benefits just a small change in our everyday habits can make. It means less damaging plastic finding its inevitable way into our waterways and countryside. This is a massive boon for nature and wildlife.



Tesco has developed its own circular economy solution to turn its back-of-store plastic waste into plastic bags whilst other companies such as Marks and Spencer donated half of the proceeds from the bag charge to local charities, and the other half to international charities such as Macmillan Cancer Research and the Marine Conservation Society. Source: edie newsroom (edie.net)

MINISTERS 'FAILING' ON PLANNING REFORMS

The government has failed to deliver a pledge to reduce planning barriers, say rural business leaders. Rural businesses continue to be held back by the delays, inefficiencies and inflexibilities of the planning system, said the Country Land and Business Association. A year has passed since ministers committed to the delivery of a 10-point plan for boosting productivity in rural areas, said the CLA. A consultation on reforms followed the 10-point plan which pledged to review planning rules that were holding back communities, jobs and growth. But the CLA said rural communities had seen no outcomes and inaction was harming all those who lived and worked in the countryside.

"Businesses across our countryside are working through tough times," said CLA President Ross Murray. "There is a bright future ahead for many but it requires investment.

"It is hard enough for businesses to take steps to invest but it can become impossible when faced with confusing, slow and obstructive planning rules." For many rural businesses, the best opportunities lay in diversification and developing alternative income streams such as housing, leisure or retail, said Mr Murray. "That is why the Rural Planning Review announced a year ago was so important."

For the full article please click [here](#)

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