



## Essex Rural Partnership

### ERP Full Partnership Meeting Minutes of the Meeting held at 10:00am on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011 The Essex Golf and Country Club, Earls Colne

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#### Present:

|     |            |               |                                            |
|-----|------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|
| RA  | Rosemary   | Alexander     | Farm Crisis Network                        |
| PB  | Peter      | Baggott       | Essex Association of Local Councils        |
| KBI | Keith      | Blackburn     | Essex County Council                       |
| JB  | Canon John | Brown         | Church of England (Vice Chair)             |
| JBu | John       | Buchanan      | Essex Association of Local Councils        |
| LB  | Lucinda    | Butcher       | Essex Wildlife Trust                       |
| PC  | Peter      | Chillingworth | Essex Local Government Representative      |
| GC  | George     | Courtauld     | Rural Community Council of Essex           |
| JD  | Joy        | Darby         | Essex Association of Local Councils        |
| KD  | Keith      | Davis         | Farm Crisis Network                        |
| JGR | John       | Gili-Ross     | Essex Association of Local Councils        |
| SH  | Suzanne    | Harris        | Rural Community Council of Essex           |
| DH  | David      | Heathcote     | CPREssex                                   |
| KH  | Keith      | Hughes        | Business Link                              |
| MI  | Mark       | Iley          | Essex Wildlife Trust                       |
| SJ  | Sheila     | Jackman       | Essex Association of Local Councils        |
| GK  | Geoffrey   | King          | Disability Essex                           |
| AL  | Andrew     | Lowing        | Rochford District Council                  |
| LM  | Lynn       | Marston       | Maldon District Council                    |
| DM  | Daisy      | Martlew       | Rural Community Council of Essex (minutes) |
| KM  | Ken        | McDonald      | CPREssex                                   |
| TM  | Tricia     | Moxey         | CPREssex                                   |
| JN  | Revd Julie | Nelson        | Church of England                          |
| RP  | Rosemary   | Padfield      | NFU                                        |
| DP  | Dominic    | Petre         | Visit Essex                                |
| LR  | Linda      | Riley         | Voluntary Sector Training                  |
| MS  | Matthew    | Searle        | Essex County Council                       |
| SS  | Sue        | Sheppard      | Rural Community Council of Essex           |
| DS  | Darren     | Smart         | Essex County Council                       |
| PS  | Phil       | Smith         | Rural Shops Alliance                       |
| ASJ | Andrew     | St Joseph     | NFU                                        |
| IT  | Ian        | Trouse        | Natural England                            |
| GU  | Graham     | Underwood     | University of Essex                        |
| PW  | Pennie     | Wallace       | Writtle College                            |
| PaW | Paul       | Williams      | Essex County Council                       |
| PhW | Philip     | Wilson        | Essex County Council                       |
| RW  | Rob        | Wise          | Country Land and Business Association      |

## Apologies:

|     |          |              |                                                   |
|-----|----------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| LA  | Lindsey  | Allen        | Forestry Commission                               |
| AB  | Angela   | Balcombe     | Essex County Council                              |
| LBa | Revd Lee | Batson       | Church of England                                 |
| SC  | Sue      | Cornwell     | Colchester Borough Council                        |
| JC  | Judy     | Cuddeford    | Braintree District Voluntary Services Association |
| KE  | Ken      | Edwards      | Chelmsford LSP                                    |
| AG  | Adrian   | Gascoyne     | Essex County Council                              |
| JH  | John     | Hall         | Essex Wildlife Trust                              |
| PH  | Paul     | Harris       | Maldon District Community Transport               |
| JJ  | John     | Jowers       | Essex County Council (Chair)                      |
| CK  | Caroline | Kay          | Moat Housing                                      |
| PM  | Peter    | Martin       | Essex County Council                              |
| CM  | Chris    | Moor         | English Rural Housing                             |
| RPa | Rosemary | Padfield     | NFU                                               |
| MP  | Mick     | Page         | Essex County Council                              |
| JP  | Jules    | Pretty       | University of Essex                               |
| RP  | Rachael  | Price        | Essex County Council                              |
| WS  | Wendy    | Scattergood  | Braintree District Council                        |
| NS  | Nick     | Shuttleworth | Rural Community Council of Essex                  |
| BT  | Brenda   | Towle        | Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services        |
| RW  | Richard  | Woolley      | Rural Community Council of Essex                  |

### 1 **Welcome and Introductions**

Vice Chairman Canon John Brown welcomed all to the meeting.

**Action**

### 2 **Apologies**

Apologies were taken as read. (Please see above for details).

### 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

Rosemary Alexander should be added to the apologies

#### **3.1 Matters Arising**

Matters arising were dealt with in the main agenda items.

### 4 **Heritage Country – a proposal for West Essex**

JB introduced David Heathcote and Ken McDonald from CPREssex, who gave a presentation on the Hundred Parishes initiative (*available to download shortly via the ERP website*). The Hundred Parishes, still in the early stages, has been set up to protect the historic heritage of NW Essex. The area is one of the least populated parts of SE England, with 6000 listed buildings and a very long historical link between humans and the landscape, which is unusual in the UK. It faces a number of pressures, particularly creeping suburban development. The challenge is to look after the landscape without hindering economic growth. The goal is for the area to be recognised in the LDF and become as well known as places such as the Cotswolds.

JGR – Is there a danger that this initiative could displace development into other areas?

**Answer:** If the initiative works, we are expecting to see areas joining up, for example the Hundred Parishes may join with Dedham Vale. We are not anti-development; this is a positive campaign that looks at how to sensibly deal with change and growth.

There were several recommendations from the group, including approaching Uttlesford District Council and Parish Councils for their support, as well as Stansted Airport and Harlow District Council to access some funding. MS reported that Uttlesford District Council is developing their LDF currently and suggested the Hundred Parishes get involved ASAP.

## **5 Living Landscapes**

JB introduced Lucinda Butcher from Essex Wildlife Trust, who gave a presentation on Living Landscapes (*available to download shortly via the ERP website*). Living Landscapes represents a move away from island conservation in order to restore, recreate and connect habitats and help nature adapt to climate change.

In December 2007 the Wildlife Trust mapped areas in Essex based on integrity of wildlife, which was recognised by the LAA as Local Indicator 10.1. Vision Documents were written for a number of Living Landscapes, which recognise the current position of the area, then through consultation with the local communities, statutory and non statutory authorities identify projects for the local environment, community and economy. The documents will continue to evolve over time.

Several members identified an overlap between the work done by Essex Wildlife Trust and the Hundred Parishes initiative. JB suggested the discussions continue during the refreshment break.

**A 20 minute interval was taken for refreshments at 11:15 am**

## **6 Report on Sub National Activities**

### **6.1 East of England Rural Forum (EERF) (Suzanne Harris)**

The latest meeting of the EERF, in conjunction with its AGM, took place last month. Until the restructure becomes clear the EERF will continue to exist as a regional rural forum that still provides an important direct link to Defra. The LEP will pick up some of the economic issues, but the cover of social and environmental issues is unsure.

Pat Holtom was re-elected as Chair; Martin Collison and SH were elected as Vice Chairs.

A presentation was given by Age UK, and will shortly be available on the EERF website: <http://www.eerf.org.uk/forum-meetings.shtml>

Three action planning events for the Regional Rural White Paper were held recently, one of which was held in Essex and was attended by various members of the ERP, including SH. The event was well attended and achieved a high level of input. The report is not yet ready for publication but will be circulated and uploaded on to the website in due course.

SH also attended the national meeting of Rural Affairs For a Chairs with the Rural Minister (Richard Benyon MP) at Defra in place of Pat Holtom. These meetings may not continue in the same way but meetings between Defra and the rural

minister with sub-national bodies will continue on a fairly regular basis (2-3 per year). The group is looking to broaden attendance from 8 to a maximum of 20 people, including representatives from sustainable food and farming sector. The South East is keen to split into two regions – one of which will reflect the new LEP area, including Greater Essex with Kent and E. Sussex. If the six counties in East of England continue to collaborate, Essex could find itself being represented by both a north and a south grouping.

Defra is expanding its rural team. It is hoped that one result of this will be that more staff travel out of London more often, with a possibility that a representative will attend a future ERP meeting.

Amongst the new Defra team members is John Coleman, who previously visited ERP when he accompanied Stuart Burgess looking at potential Post Office Closures a few years ago.

## **6.2 Essex, Kent and East Sussex LEP (Philip Wilson)**

The shadow LEP board, made up of around 40 people, has met twice so far. At the last meeting the board was awaiting the Budget for information on funding. Before Christmas a meeting took place between Action in Rural Sussex (AIRS), Kent RCC and Essex RCC; a draft paper, detailing rural interests in the LEP and approved by these organisations, and their respective County Councils, will be circulated shortly.

SH added that she had attended a national meeting of rural LEP representatives last week. Her feeling was that the Greater Essex, Kent and East Sussex LEP was making good progress, neither far ahead or far behind others – a paper for rural issues was something that other LEPs had not done, but which was of interest to them.

## **7 Services in Rural Essex**

SH gave a presentation on the preliminary findings from the Rural Services Survey (*available to download shortly via the ERP website*). SH explained that more detail would be included in the written report, including a comparison between 2008 and 2010 data.

DP – does the survey identify actively managed parish websites?

**Answer:** No, but it does break down who manages the website, whether that be the Parish Council or a parishioner, for example. This is something we will consider including in the next survey

PhW – does the survey include details of subscription for newsletters, e.g. whether they are free?

**Answer:** No, but it does request the editor's contact details.

JB – does it ask about frequency of delivery for newsletters?

**Answer:** No. It was important that we strike a balance between the detail and information obtained and the length of the survey. The feedback from 2008's survey was that it was too long. It was important to focus the survey questions on issues we might be able to influence or data we could use, and to avoid questions where the answers may be 'of interest'.

## **8 ERP Action Groups and taking the Essex Rural Strategy forward**

### **8.1 Report from the ERP Community Action Group (Canon John Brown)**

The last meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> March. The CAG received an update from the Village Agents project, which is hoping to expand. Sarah Sapsford from RCCE gave a presentation on Community Led Plans. A Parish-by-Parish spreadsheet showing where RCCE had worked over the last few years was displayed at the meeting. It was suggested that members of the CAG visit communities who are implementing Big Society projects on the ground. Suggested places to visit include Steeple Bumpstead, Wivenhoe and Harwich, although there is a question over how rural the latter is. Please inform DM if you wish to be a part of this or have any suggestions for places to visit.

**AII/DM**

### **8.2 Report from the ERP Economic Action Group (Philip Wilson)**

Nothing to report as the group has not met since 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010. DM has circulated dates in May for the next meeting.

### **8.3 Report from the ERP Environment Action Group (Peter Baggott)**

The last meeting was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Two presentations were given; one on Living Landscapes by Lucinda Butcher and the other on Local Wildlife Sites by Adam Rochester, both from Essex Wildlife Trust. The target for Local Wildlife Sites has been achieved and a work party was held at Layer Breton Heath on 11<sup>th</sup> March to celebrate. Future items for meetings include access to funding to support environmental initiatives, business, coastal, green and local initiatives, and a proposed joint meeting with the Economic Action Group. The next Environment Action Group meeting will be held on 12<sup>th</sup> May at RCCE Offices.

### **8.1 Report from the ERP Steering Group (Suzanne Harris)**

The last meeting was held on 18<sup>th</sup> February. The focus of the meeting was on structural changes and where the ERP fits in to regional structures. SH put forward a formal proposal from the Steering Group that the Terms of Reference of the ERP Steering Group be amended to remove reference to a Government Office representative. Peter Baggott seconded the motion and all other ERP members present agreed.

## **9 Group discussions**

Discussions took place regarding ideas for future agenda items for the Essex Rural Partnership. Suggestions were as follows:

- The provision of rural broadband, in particular super-fast broadband
- Localism Bill – Community Right to Buy, Build etc.
- Extending parishes into un-parished areas – suggestion that EALC could give a presentation
- Sources of funding
- How to improve communication (in light of the demise of LAA and area fora)
- What is the Big Society?
- Presentations on successful community projects regarding service provision
- Education, training and skills
- Multi-use community assets
- Access to services for the poor and disadvantaged - how to better use mobile services, examples of good practice, e.g. use of Churches for parish services
- Rural Services Survey presentation focussing on a comparison between 2008 and 2010
- The social opportunities and quality of village schools

**SH/DM**

- Local entrepreneurship, with a focus on people moving out of London to start up businesses
- The London 2012 Olympics – proposal to invite a representative from Epping Forest District to deliver a presentation
- Changes to planning and the impact on the environment
- Debate over what constitutes rural and the countryside
- The changing economic landscape for farming and the conflict between farming needs and social access to the countryside
- Farmers and others working collectively to overcome the silo culture
- Horticulture in West Essex
- The impact of climate change on growth, linked to food security – proposal to invite Jon Regan to give a presentation on food security and information regarding the new Edible Essex project
- Biodiversity offsetting/green banking – MI offered to give a presentation at the next meeting
- Woodfuel as a viable market in Essex

SH/DM

MI/SH

## 10 Soapbox items

KH announced that EIDB is delivering Government funded support to businesses. Business Link services end on 25<sup>th</sup> November, to be replaced with a website and contact centre. KH welcomes any queries or requests for advice.

## 11 Any Other Business

JBU Reported that a new sub-regional organisation had emerged – the East of England Local Government Association. JBU Welcomes any requests for further information.

JGR wished to thank Essex County Council for setting up the Community Initiatives Fund, now the Big Society Fund, which has provided rural communities with the support to maintain important projects.

**Action:** the ERP will write a formal letter to Cllr Peter Martin expressing its thanks

SH

SH requested suggestions for venues for future meetings:

- PW – Writtle College
- LR – EDPA Rochford

### 11.2 Dates of future meetings/events

Next full ERP to be held in July

**The meeting concluded at 1:00 pm**