

Economic

Rural businesses advised to prepare for growth in woodfuel demand

The [Forestry Commission](#) has advised rural heating and woodland management businesses to prepare for an increase in demand for woodfuel this autumn following plans to boost the sector. The 'Woodfuel Implementation Plan' sets out how woodfuel can be used to support the rural economy, improve woodland and biodiversity and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Broadband vision for Essex

A conference that showcased [next generation broadband](#) for Essex was held in Cold Norton on 21st June. The event, which was one of a series of roadshows held around the UK, brought together suppliers, community stakeholders, investors and experts to explore and understand the opportunities to transform local broadband access networks.

New 'white space' broadband trials

BT has announced a [new trial of wireless broadband](#) using the 'white space' between the Ultra-High Frequency TV Spectrum. If successful it could bring super-fast broadband to the Scottish Isle of Bute and be extended to other rural areas. The trial is being run in association with a number of partners, including the BBC, and is backed by funding from the Government's Technology Strategy Board.

New research highlights importance of local food webs

CPRE has published a series of reports looking at the [impact local food webs](#) have on settlements across England. The six location reports form part of extensive research into how local food benefits communities, local economies and rural areas.

Communities

British seaside towns have enormous potential

[Communities Minister Bob Neill](#) has identified the enormous potential of seaside towns in a speech at the first ever international conference for coastal communities. The conference, held in Clacton and hosted by Tendring District Council, Essex County Council and the Council of Europe, discussed how seaside towns could become economic hubs and shared success stories from across Europe.

Faith groups urged to play a bigger role in communities

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has urged [faith groups](#) to make use of new powers in the Localism Bill to play a more active and visible role in their community. Speaking to the Cinnamon Network – a faith based

charity group – Mr Pickles outlined the Government’s financial support and commitment to faith groups, including proposals to cut red tape that hinders their involvement in local life. A free conference was also held on 27th June in Chelmsford entitled ‘[The Big Question: Faith in Public Life](#)’. Organised by Essex County Council, East of England Faiths Council and Parliamentary Outreach, the conference discussed how faith and inter-faith groups could participate in policy making, create partnerships and contribute to civic life.

More support for voluntary and community groups to save local assets

Planning Minister Greg Clarke has pledged [more support for voluntary and community groups](#) campaigning to save threatened local assets. Under the revised guidance, Mr Clarke has called on councils to take seriously all viable requests from communities for a compulsory purchase order. Local councils will have to formally respond to all viable requests, outlining the reasons behind their decision.

Helping communities ‘know their place’

ACRE and English Heritage have published a guide to help Community Led Planning groups consider their local heritage in their plans. ‘[Knowing Your Place](#)’ provides advice on how to access information about local history and identify why it’s so important.

Commission on localism agenda launched

A high level commission has been launched to help deliver a workable and sustainable devolution of power to local communities. The [NLGN’s Commission on Next Localism](#) aims to provide a platform for local authorities to discuss and share ideas, ultimately shaping the way the localism agenda is delivered.

Environment

Energy plans published for debate in parliament

The Government has published the finalised [Energy National Policy Statements \(NPSs\)](#) following an extensive public consultation earlier this year. The Energy NPSs, to be debated in Parliament, set out a detailed framework for decision making and the need for investment in new energy sources. The Nuclear NPS lists eight sites suitable for new nuclear power stations by 2025, including Bradwell and Sizewell.

Plans announced for ‘zero waste economy’

The results of the Government’s [comprehensive review of waste](#) have been announced, outlining plans to help residents and businesses reduce their waste and increase recycling. Some of the priorities include landfill restrictions and bans on certain materials, scrapping bin fines and taxes, and a crack-down on illegal fly-tipping. The Government has also published the Anaerobic Digestion (AD) strategy and action plan, which includes guidance on the costs and benefits of AD.

Natural Environment White Paper published

The Government has published the first White Paper on the natural environment in 20 years. ‘[The Natural Choice](#)’ sets out a detailed plan of action for repairing past damage to the environment and gives powers to [communities](#) to designate protected green areas as part of their Neighbourhood Plan. New initiatives outlined in the document include Local Nature Partnerships, Nature Improvement Areas and a voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting.

New planning policy focus on sustainable development

Planning Minister Greg Clark has announced a major new change to planning policy that will ensure new development encompasses environmental protection. The new '[presumption in favour of sustainable development](#)' is to be part of a National Planning Policy Framework and will give local communities more of a say through a Local Plan, developed in partnership with their local council.

Guidance on protecting forests from pests published

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has published important new [guidance](#) that sets out internationally recommended standards for measuring the health of trees and how to minimize the risk from pests and diseases. The 'Guide to Implementation of Phytosanitary Standards in Forestry' has been recommended for anyone involved in British forestry.

Free trees for schools and community groups

The Woodland Trust's [Jubilee Woodlands Project](#) is offering free tree packs to schools and community groups to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and help transform the landscape in a generation. The packs, which are themed to help groups choose which is most suitable, all contain a Royal Sapling grown from seeds collected on royal estates such as Sandringham. There are 1,000 free packs available for groups to apply for this autumn, and many more will be available next year.

Other News

RCCE launches 2011 Augustine Courtauld Trust Awards

RCCE, supported by the Augustine Courtauld Trust, has launched this year's awards scheme for village hall and community building members. The [Augustine Courtauld Awards scheme](#) provides cash prizes for small scale projects that will encourage greater or new use of the hall. The closing date for applications is 30th September 2011; winners will be announced at the RCCE Village Halls and Community Buildings Conference on 22nd October 2011.

Dates for your diary

6th July	RCCE AGM, The Essex Golf and Country Club
20th July	Full Essex Rural Partnership meeting, Writtle College
29th July	Edible Essex event 'Setting up an Allotment or Orchard', RCCE Offices (book in advance)
22nd September	Economic Action Group meeting, County Hall
27th September	EALC AGM
2nd November	East of England Rural Forum meeting

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