

Economic

£150 million to improve UK mobile phone coverage

The Chancellor has announced that the [Government](#) will invest £150 million to improve mobile phone coverage in the UK. The investment will help improve coverage and quality of mobile phone services for the five to ten per cent of consumers that live and work in areas where existing coverage is poor or non-existent.

SMEs could save £millions under new Government proposals

More than 100, 000 UK businesses could save at least £600 million in accountancy and administration costs every year, under new proposals published by the [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#). The Consultation 'Audit Exemptions and Change of Accounting Framework' sets out plans for SMEs to decide whether or not to have an audit.

DCMS publish Broadband Delivery Framework summary

The [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#), (DCMS) has published a summary of BDUK's Broadband Delivery Framework. The summary is intended for potential customers of the framework, including local authorities and other interested stakeholders, to help them understand its scope and operation.

Essex Tourism Award winners announced

The cream of the Essex tourism industry was celebrated at the Essex Tourism Awards on 13th October, showcasing the high quality attractions and accommodation the county has to offer. The third Essex Tourism Awards took place at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Stansted; for a list of winners see [Visit Essex](#).

Communities

ACRE publishes reports on state, management and use of rural community buildings

[ACRE](#) has released two reports in a series of six based on data collated from 2, 355 rural community buildings across the country. 'The State and Management of Rural Community Buildings' examines the responsibility trustees undertake and makes recommendations. 'The Changing Use of Rural Community Buildings' looks at the health of rural community life and the way communities are responding to challenges they face.

Planning powers for communities to shape their neighbourhood

Plans that will give communities the ability to decide on the look and feel of development in their area have been published for consultation by Decentralisation Minister Greg Clark. [Neighbourhood Planning](#) will give

communities a say on new homes, shops, design of buildings and green spaces they wish to protect. The consultation closes on Thursday 5th January 2012.

BT launches new toolkit to help community groups get online

BT is offering charities and not-for-profit groups the opportunity to set up their own website free of charge. The '[BT Community Web Kit](#)' is simple, easy-to-use and packed full of features that will give the website a professional look.

£20 million Social Action Fund launched

A new [Social Action Fund](#), designed to support the creation of new social action opportunities, including the giving of time, money, knowledge and assets, has been launched by the Cabinet Office. Worth over £20 million, the Fund will offer grants of at least £100, 000 to projects across England. The first window for applications closes at noon on Wednesday 2nd November 2011.

Community Builders Fund reopened

The [Community Builders Fund](#) has reopened for applications from established organisations with plans for sustainable, community regeneration projects in their local area. Loans are available to organisations who can demonstrate financial contributions from the community and the positive impact the project will have. The Fund is open for applications until noon on Friday 9th December 2011.

Community First Fund to boost Big Society

An £80 million [Community First Fund](#), which will provide small grants to community groups and projects, has been launched by the Cabinet Office. The Fund has been deemed a flagship Big Society initiative that will encourage and support people to do more in their communities. A [Community First](#) website has also been set up, which allows communities to sign up for support.

Environment

British Waterways to be renamed Canal and River Trust

British Waterways will change its name to the Canal and River Trust when the public corporation becomes an independent charity in April 2012. The new charity, which is currently being managed by a shadow board of transition trustees, has also unveiled a new logo in a [review document](#) published this month.

One year to Green Deal as Energy Act becomes law

The Energy Act has become law, setting out the legal framework for the [Green Deal](#), which will be launched next autumn. The Green Deal will help people insulate against rising energy prices and provide extra help for the most vulnerable and hardest to treat homes.

Government to abolish Regional Plans and protect the Green Belt

Pressure to build on the Green belt is being removed via the [abolishment of Regional Plans](#), set out in environmental assessments published last month. Regional Plans imposed housing targets on local communities and put pressure on local authorities to cut the green belt in 30 towns across the country.

EEC hosts first coastal conference

Essex County Council hosted the first Essex coastal conference, which saw over 100 people from the public, private and voluntary sectors gather to discuss the future of Essex's coast. The keynote presentation was delivered by Peter Bride from the Department for Communities and Local Government, followed by presentations from the Marine Management Organisation, Natural England, Essex Wildlife Trust and others.

Other News

Services in Rural Essex 2011 Report now online

The results of the 2011 Services in Rural Essex Survey have been published [online](#). The survey, conducted by RCCE for the Essex Rural Partnership, updates information gathered from the 2008 Rural Services Survey and gives a broad view of service trends in rural areas of Essex.

Have your say on future of the Post Office

Rural communities are being encouraged to respond to a government consultation on the future of the Post Office. The consultation document '[Building a Mutual Post Office](#)' sets out options to move the Post Office from state-ownership to a mutual model and explains how interested parties can engage and comment on the proposals.

New website pulls together voluntary sector research and evidence

The [Third Sector Research Centre](#) has launched a new website that pulls together evidence and research on a range of voluntary sector projects. The Third Sector Knowledge Portal, built in partnership with the British Library and funded by £200, 000 from the Big Lottery, will help inform the work of researchers, policymakers, academics, frontline service providers and other stakeholders across the country.

Dates for your diary

16th November	East of England Rural Forum meeting , NFU Offices, Newmarket
29th November	Community Action Group meeting, RCCE Offices, Feering
30th November	Environment Action Group meeting, RCCE Offices, Feering
18th January	Full Essex Rural Partnership & East of England Rural Forum – joint meeting, Hylands House, Chelmsford

This newsletter is produced and sent by Rural Community Council of Essex on behalf of the Essex Rural Partnership. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in future please email info@essexruralpartnership.org.uk with 'unsubscribe' as the email subject.

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