



**Essex Rural Partnership Full Membership Meeting
Minutes of the Meeting held on**

**Wednesday 16th May 2007
9.30 am - 1.00 pm
Crossing Temple Barns**

Present:

Chair - Peter Martin (PM)	Vice Chair – John Brown (JB)
Terry Taber – FSB (TT)	John Hall– EWT (JH)
Wendy Scattergood – ELGA (WS)	Richard Woolley – RCCE (RW)
Peter Baggott - EALC (PB)	Joy Sheppard- EALC (JS)
Sandy Cruickshank -Go East (SC)	Kitty Barrett - BDC (KB)
Nick Shuttleworth – RCCE (NS)	Mavis Webster RDC (MW)
Keith Blackburn- ECC (KBL)	Paul Williams ACL (PW)
Anthony Buston – ECC (AB)	Alex Butler-Zagni NFU (ABZ)
Diana Cross – Z bikes (DC)	Mike Hall – Writtle College (MH)
Wendy Jackson – ECC (WJ)	Geoffrey King – EDAL (GK)
Rachel Payne – ACRE (Cambs) (RP)	Dominic Petre (DP)
Chris Philpot- Barleylands (CP)	Suzanne Rom – RDC (SROM)
Keith Lawson – ECC (KL)	Kris Radley- RCCE (KR)
Suzanne Roast - RCCE (SR)	Minutes -Kirsty Monk (KM)
Ed Gregory- ECC (EG)	

Apologies:

Dianne Hardy – Exdra (DH)	Mick Page – EERF (MP)
Chris Allen –EEDA (CA)	Gemma Driscoll ECC GD
Peter Chillingworth (PC)	
Jane Cryer –EET (JC)	Clive Mardiner - EREC (CM)
Alistair Pollock - Thames Gateway South Essex (AP)	Melanie Rundle -CDC (MR)
Jenny Salisbury ECC Library Services (JS)	Anthony Shelton- Age Concern Essex (AS)
Linda Smart ECC (LS)	Sue Sumner Uttlesford CVS

1 **Chairman's Introduction**

Peter Martin (Chairman) welcomed and thanked all for attending the meeting. The apologies were read.

PM explained to the members present that his portfolio would be moving away from rural affairs, although he would still retain the environmental aspect in his new role; he hoped to still attend future Essex Rural Partnership Meetings (ERP) in this capacity. However this was his last Full Membership meeting as Chairman of the ERP. Mr John Jowers is to take over the Rural Affairs Portfolio.

PM thanked ERP members for their support during his Chairmanship since 2001, and that he enjoyed his time as Chair on issues that were very dear to his heart.

PM asked that the Steering Group review and oversee arrangements for the election of the next ERP Chairman at their next meeting.

Action: ERP Steering Group to make arrangements for the election of the next ERP Chair.

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting, 31st January 2007, & matters arising**

No matters of accuracy were raised

The minutes were then agreed by those present.

The following were reported as updates/ matters arising from those minutes;

Matters arising were covered within the main agenda items.

3 **Presentation – “Linking Communities” by Kris Radley RCCE**

Kris Radley (KR) from RCCE presented an overview of the Linking Communities Project to the meeting. (for full details of the presentation a copy is available on request)

KR explained that rural transport has a direct impact on people's ability to access employment, education, shopping, health and leisure facilities. The Linking Communities project set out to tackle issues of access and transport by:

- Offering independent advice on transport and access options.
- Signposting to funding sources and information
- Linking Communities Fast Track Fund – £35,000 given to 50 projects in the County to help improve rural transport and access projects.
- Developing partnerships and facilitating projects
- Seek, explore and test innovative forms of transport and service delivery in rural areas
- Influencing Policy
- Undertaking Community Transport Surveys, Reviews and Public Consultations.
- Identifying transport needs and enabling communities to meet the needs of social and disadvantaged groups.
- Looking at the future sustainable/environmentally friendly methods of transport in Essex and planning and access issues.

The Linking Communities Project also hosted the Rural Transport and Access Network or RTAN. This was an amalgamation of transport groups and organisations that meet on a bi-annual basis at

networking lunches to share good practice, topics of interest and share information.

KR explained that currently there was a national and regional shortage of money available for funding transport issues and projects. The Linking Communities Project is self was only due to be funded until March 2008 and other schemes were finding it equally hard to find funding. A grass roots policy review was needed to ensure that funding support for transport and access schemes could continue in the future.

Questions

PM said that he was struck by the variety and comprehensive help offered by the Linking Communities Project and asked how the ERP could engage to help.

KR felt that if the Linking Communities project could continue either via the current funders, the Rural and Social Community Fund (RSCP) or another funding source, this would continue the good work already achieved and enable future partnership working.

PM advised the meeting that the LAA programme in the future may be an important funding source in the future.

Keith Hughes (KH) raised the issue of communities at the borders of Essex whose economic centres may be cross border (for example in Suffolk) and the difficulties this presents for transport links for Essex Users.

KR explained that good examples of cross boundary community transport schemes existed in Haverhill, Suffolk, Cambridge and Essex but there where gaps in the service.

Action KR to pass on contact details to KH

Susan Rom (SROM) Rochford District Council asked about foot and private car ferry schemes and setting up new schemes.

KR offered to help SROM with further information after the meeting.

NS Felt that the lack of funding for transport schemes and the fact that EEDA are currently not funding these schemes in Essex should be raised by the ERP's Essex Regional Forums EERF representative at their next meeting to highlight this important issue at Regional level.

Actions:

- *The Chair suggested that the partnership should write to voice concerns about the lack of funding for transport.*
- *The ERP EERF representative will raise this issue at the next Regional Forum meeting*
- *The Transport funding issue will be raised at the next 6 counties meeting by Keith Blackburn (ECC)*

4 Presentation by Diana Cross (DC) - Rainer "Z-Bikes - a wheels to work project in rural Essex" (full copy of the presentation available on request)

DC explained that Rainer's Mission was to offer under-supported young people a range of services designed to give them the emotional and practical support they need to lead secure and fulfilled lives. The Z bikes project started in Started 2004 as one of many Rainer's projects and is run in partnership with Uttlesford District Council for residents currently 16 – 18 years who are actively seeking or in Education, Employment or Training. Motor bikes are provided to young people who have an unreasonable journey time or complexity, have no access to public transport and hold a current driving license, (this may be provisional). They have 16 Bikes, and each Young Person must:

- *Undertake full training*

- *Be fitted for helmet and protective clothing*
- *Make regular payments of £20.00 per month*
- *Take bike for monthly checks by local garage,*
- *6 Monthly Service for bikes*
- *Pay for petrol, oil and light bulbs*
- *Be responsible for the security and roadworthiness of the bike*

There is no means testing used when accessing eligibility for the scheme, commitment to planning and progressing their future crucial. There is a demonstrated need for this facility for young people in Essex as access to further education, training and employment is difficult in rural areas and to the end Rainer's are seeking to extend the Zbikes project in other areas of the County.

Questions:

Keith Blackburn (KB) asked about road safety implications for young people on this scheme, considering the high numbers of motorcyclist accidents on Essex Roads.

DC replied that full comprehensive training (CBT) was given to all young people on the scheme and safety equipment and regular maintenance checks on bikes had proven to be effective measure to safeguard participants. Responsible ownership was a key part of the young person being allowed to continue in the scheme.

Richard Woolley (RW) asked if Rainer monitored the effectiveness scheme after the young people had left the project.

DC confirmed that that Rainer carryout monitoring and that the results showed that 100% of scheme participants continue their employment and training in the first six months of returning their motor bikes. The scheme gives them a proven helping hand to get started on the career ladder or continue their education.

PM Thanked DC for her useful presentation and remarked that it was clear that more funding to widen the scheme and for transport generally was required. He invited members to chat with DC and KR during the interval.

5 Reports from the ERP Steering Group and Action Groups:

Brief written reports by Suzanne Roast (SR) – RCCE regarding the ERP Steering Group, ERP CAG Group and ERP Post Office Working Groups were circulated to the meeting.

Steering Group

East of England Regional Forum (EERF) Representative.

John Hall was re-elected as ERP representative on Eastern Region Rural Forum (EERF) for a further 2 year period.

Pilot Funding Schemes

It was agreed that Essex would raise 'Pilot Funding schemes' during the Soapbox session at the EERF meeting. Concern was expressed that many funding schemes allow project pilots to be set up, but do not allow sufficient funding to enable any projects with potential for long-term sustainability to reach a stage of maturity at which they can generate 100% funding (by earnings or through mainstream funding).

ERP Website

The Essex Rural Partnership has now registered a domain name for it's own website – www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk More detail will be added to this site over the coming weeks/months. The Website would hold lots of useful Links to member organisations, agendas and minutes from ERP and subgroup meetings, meeting dates etc. Articles on key areas of work for the ERP such as the Essex Rural Partnership's Action Plan and Strategy, with special working group updates such as the project to help rural communities facing forthcoming closure of a number of rural post offices in the county.

Rural Post Offices

The dedicated ERP working group has now met twice.

The group has a twofold purpose:

- To find ways to encourage people to use their local PO (both private and business use)
- To assist communities who may wish to establish an 'outreach' delivery service (as described in the DTI Consultation document)

The groups has agreed the following actions:

- To produce a revised issue of a previous publication, to highlight services offered by Pos, and encourage people to use their local PO
- To produce a new publication, aimed at offering advice to communities who wish to set up an outreach service (giving information about grants and offering practical suggestions and considerations)
- To research feasibility of using pre-identified possible locations/partners for an outreach service

It is known that other counties in the region are considering establishing an exemplar Multi-Purpose Centre. There has been a conscious decision in Essex to develop a solution that will benefit a large number of communities, and where exemplar models are assisted, that they be of such a nature that they can be duplicated elsewhere (in terms of practicality and funding).

Community Action Group

The Community Planning Fund has allocated its full budget for 2006-7. Applications for the current year are already being received. The Fund has proved very popular, and it is hoped that continuation funding can be secured this year to ensure that more communities can benefit in this way; the Community Planning Fund supports community-led projects where volunteers (including representatives from local Parish Councils) develop an action plan to address issues of local importance.

The Community Action Group has identified the key priorities from the **Essex Rural Strategy**, and members are currently deciding which should form main the focus over the few months.

Members of the Community Action Group are also involved in some joint projects:

- Post Offices
- Market Towns
- Development of Rural Retail Adviser Post
- Development of Remote Rural Access Project

Economic Action Group

Keith Blackburn (KB) – ECC, reported that the ERP Economic Action Group had met twice since the last meeting of the full ERP and had set up a special group to look at rural planning and diversification issues and the interaction of local planning polices. The group was hoping to conclude by the Autumn.

- The Economic Action Group had also looked at the following issues:
- Concern about excess signage in rural areas – good progress has been made on this issue by the group
- Issue of Migrant Workers
- Sustainable construction techniques – early adoption for small business giving economic advantages

PM felt that the Planning Issue needed to looked in to at by the ERP and that because of the significant impact on rural communities we should be getting involved ourselves.

A general discussion was held by the meeting regarding the difficulties facing rural communities in

overcoming red tape and planning regulations, in respect of the conversion of rural buildings to other uses such as small business premises.

Ed Gregory - ECC confirmed that ECC had agreed to lobby for a change to planning regulations at the next regional forum to enable the regeneration and change of use of redundant rural buildings.

Richard Woolley –RCCE advised the meeting that Cllr. Mick Page had raised this issue at Regional level but not met with a very sympathetic response.

KB responded that the EcAG Action Group had looked at rural diversification as a whole subject not specifically the issue of the conversion of rural buildings.

Action:

The Chair recommended that the planning issue be taken forward by the ERP to Regional and Six County Level and perhaps seeking MP's assistance.

It was also suggested that the new Chair of the Regional Forum John Yates should be invited to a future meeting of the partnership.

Environment Action Group (EnvAG)

Peter Baggott (PB) – EALC reported that the last meeting of the EnvAG was held on 01/05/07 and that the main focus was the drive by ECC to reduce the environmental impact of households, business and public buildings in Essex, by reducing carbon dioxide emissions, improving energy efficiency, promoting change to bio fuels amongst many other measures. The corporate plan is an internal focus that ECC have set. ECC are working on reducing carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide emissions. The key message was Reduce Re-use and Recycle. A Carbon reduction toolkit was to be produced with this aim.

The National Association of Local Councils NALC is organising a conference in October in Bournemouth on Climate change.

Progress is being made with the Climate Change agenda, however there needs to be more focus on water efficiency measures. The Climate Change Bill/Act is out to consultation currently and the deadline for comments is 12th June.

EnvAG were reviewing the LAA 12.1 limit/ targets on Essex Environmental Impact :

- 12.1a Household waste per head
- 12.1b CO2 emissions for domestic energy use
- 12.1c CO2 emissions for commercial energy use

PB felt It was going to be hard to achieve the LAA targets set and the prime weapon would be the Essex Carbon Reduction Programme.

Mike Hall (MH) – Writtle College, advised the meeting that there was a carbon reduction event being held on 06/08/07 -07/08/07.

Refreshments were then served from 11.30am -12.00pm.

6 The Essex Rural Strategy Action Plan (ESRAP)Update

Suzanne Roast (SR) advised the meeting that a preliminary prioritising of the ERSAP had been undertaken and tasks prioritised to reflect the most urgent / high priority tasks.

Actions:

- After a general discussion the members suggested that the 3 main ERP action groups work together to ensure that the tasks of the action plan are current and correctly prioritised and allocated with no unnecessary overlap. The ERSAP would be revised and the new report circulated at the next full meeting of the partnership (12/09/07). - SR
- It was decided that an annual review of the ERSAP should be undertaken by the Steering Group and the ERP membership advised.

- It was also felt that better communication between the action groups should be put in place to ensure that one group was not waiting for another to finish an action before it could begin its work on that particular ERSAP task.
- The new ERP website could also be used to show Action plan updates from the action groups.

7 Report from the Regional Rural Forum

John Hall (JH) – EWT, reported that Affordable Housing will be an important item at the next Regional Rural Forum meeting (13/06/07) as well as the learning and skills initiative and how rural communities can be supported. JH invited views from the membership to be carried forward to the meeting.

Joy Sheppard (JS) – EALC advised the meeting that they had had a member on the Regional Forum but that as he had lost his seat they were unsure as to whether they would be able to continue.

EG suggested that ERP meetings be scheduled to sequence in with the Regional Forum Meetings.

8 Report from the Farmers Seminar.

Keith Blackburn (KB) – ECC advised the meeting that the Farmers Seminar held on 15/06/07 had been reasonably successful focusing on climate change and farming and the challenges and opportunities facing farmers in the future, as well as alternative sources of energy such as bio fuels and renewable energy sources.

Action

A general discussion was held by the membership and it was felt that Farming should be given a higher profile at future ERP meetings.

9 Year of Food and Farming

Chris Philpot- Barleylands (CP) reported that the Year of Food and Farming is an industry-led initiative aimed at helping children and young people learn more about how food is grown and produced and how it reaches the consumer. It will also help children learn more about:

- what happens on a farm & what life is like in the countryside
- how to prepare or cook food
- what good nutrition means and how that can contribute to a healthier lifestyle
- what the countryside can offer in terms of leisure, sports and employment.

The Year of Food and Farming will run through the academic year from September 2007 to July 2008. A series of national, regional and local events and learning resources will be supplemented by a wide range of other activities for children to participate in.

CP strongly requested that the ERP Members get involved in the Year of Food and Farming and support and aid its aims and objectives.

Actions:

The ERP membership felt that this project should be supported and steps were to be put into to place

to ensure that the Year of Food and Farming is aided by the ERP and work together with them.

- The Year of Food and Farming should be put as an agenda item at the next full membership meeting 12/09/07

10 Carbon Connections – presentation Mike Hall (MH) Writtle College

A copy of the full PowerPoint presentation will be circulated with these minutes.

MH gave a brief overview of Carbon Connections

- Funded by HEFCE through the HEIF 3 funding stream
- Major knowledge exchange programme
- £3 million investment fund

Objectives:

- Knowledge transfer from HEI to non-HEI sector through the application of innovation generated in a HE environment
- To enable reduction of carbon emissions
- To become self sustaining through financial returns to fund

11 A.O.B

Stuart Burgess

SR advised the meeting that Stuart Burgess visited Essex in May and found the issues concerning rural communities very interesting, on his tour he saw the Langham community shop and promised to lend his support. He will definitely come back for a more in depth visit

Thank You to Peter Martin

Nick Shuttleworth (NS) – RCCE Proposed a vote of thanks to Peter Martin who has chaired the ERP for many years and played an enormous role in uniting together the membership and encouraging us to work together. The ERP Members gave applause to Peter in their approval of these sentiments. Peter Martin warmly thanked the ERP Members for their support and looked forward to continued contact with them.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The Date of the meeting was later decided to be 12/09/07 9.30am registration, meeting commences 10.00am Lunch to follow. High Barn, Great Bardfield.

Meeting concluded at 1.00 pm