

## Economic

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### Consultation seeking views on how LEPs represent rural areas

The [Commission for Rural Communities](#) has launched a consultation on how rural interests are being recognised within Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The consultation is seeking views from LEPs, the business community, public and voluntary sectors by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

### Digital divide bad for rural business

The [Federation of Small Businesses \(FSB\)](#) has revealed that six in 10 rural areas are suffering with low broadband speeds. The 'Voice of Small Business' survey of more than 3, 000 members showed that 63% of small businesses are dissatisfied with their broadband connection compared with 48% of businesses in urban areas. The FSB is calling on the Government to rollout 20mbps superfast broadband to 98% of rural communities and businesses by 2015.

### Portas Pilots announced

The first 12 [Portas Pilot](#) towns have been announced by Local Government Minister Grant Shapps. Each town will receive a share of £1.2m and a tailored package of support from the minister and Mary Portas. A second round has also been launched, which will see an additional 12 pilots announced by the end of July.

## Communities

### Uttlesford Council launches £500, 000 Jubilee Fund

Community organisations across the [Uttlesford District](#) have been invited to bid for a share of a £500, 000 Fund, available through the New Homes Bonus from central government. Half of the money is available for community groups and half for town and parish councils. Groups can apply for a maximum of £10, 000 and a minimum of £1, 000 for projects which must be completed by March 2013.

### Over £18, 000 'Mi Community' cheques presented

Braintree District Council has presented nine local groups with cheques totaling over £18, 000 to help put their plans to improve their local communities into action. The '[Mi Community](#)' scheme aims to inspire communities to identify problems in their area and enable them, with financial and professional support, to create and deliver solutions. A second round will launch later this year.

### Essex Libraries launch innovative sensory room

Visitors to the Central Library in Chelmsford will soon be able to enjoy a [new sensory room and wall](#) situated in the children's section of the building. Developed in conjunction with Essex County Council's Inclusive

Communication Essex, the innovative room and wall include sensory features that can help children to improve concentration, hand-eye coordination and develop an understanding of cause and effect. All features of the wall are suitable for children of all ages and abilities and can equally be enjoyed by adults.

### **Challenge your local Police Commissioners about rural crime**

What are elected Police and Crime Commissioners going to do about rural crime in your area? Will it be a priority? These are some of the questions the [NFU](#) are encouraging rural communities to put to all candidates standing in the forthcoming elections for Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in the autumn. The NFU have also produced a leaflet to assist rural and farming communities in challenging candidates.

### **Community Right to Build comes into force**

Housing Minister Grant Shapps has made available £17m for local communities to get their building projects underway as part of the new [Community Right to Build](#), which came into force on 29<sup>th</sup> May. Under the new Right, communities will be able to approve new local developments, subject to specific criteria, without the need to go through the normal development process.

### **New Community Rights website launched**

The Department for Communities and Local Government has launched a new [Community Rights website](#) to give people more information about the new powers and opportunities open to them under the Localism Act. The website also includes an interactive '[Communities in Action](#)' map, showcasing local projects around the country.

### **Celebrate Community Shops Fortnight!**

The Plunkett Foundation is launching '[Community Shops Fortnight](#)' to mark all the hard work, commitment and pride that goes into running a community shop. They are calling on all community shops around the UK to join in the celebrations, from Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June – Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July, and help raise the profile of the increasingly growing sector. A number of free promotional packs and a limited number of bursaries are available to help support shop events.

## **Environment**

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### **Risk of summer drought significantly reduced**

The wettest April on record and continuing rain in May have significantly reduced the risk of widespread drought and water restrictions this summer, the [Environment Agency](#) has said. However, underground water levels are still low and some rivers are at risk of drying up over the summer from water use, therefore the Agency has stressed the importance of continuing to use water wisely.

### **Right of way rules to be revised**

Plans to modernise how [public rights of way](#) are registered have been unveiled by environment minister Richard Benyon. The plans are expected to cut the time taken to record a right of way, helping walkers and horse riders to protect those that are unrecorded as well as saving almost £20m a year by cutting bureaucracy.

## Defra publishes biodiversity indicators

Defra has published [24 indicators](#), for England and the UK as a whole, that provide an insight into the state of our natural environment. The indicators include the population status of key species, plant diversity, the status of priority species, habitats and ecosystems, protected sites, management of woodland agricultural land and fisheries, expenditure on biodiversity, and the amount of time given by volunteers to nature conservation activities.

## Other News

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### Essex Summer of Art to celebrate Olympics

[Art trails](#) including exhibitions, workshops and events are continuing across the county in June as part of the on-going Olympics 2012 celebrations. Events are being held in Brentwood, Gosfield, Leigh and Burnham this month, with further art trails planned in Essex right through to the 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

### New guidance for listing local heritage

[English Heritage](#) has produced a new best practice guide for the identification of significant local heritage assets and their management through a local list. The guide is intended to encourage a transparent and consistent approach to the process.

## Dates for your diary

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15 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>ERP Steering Group meeting</b> , RCCE Offices, Feering, 10:00am ( <i>Steering Group members only</i> )
31 <sup>st</sup> July	<b>10 Year Anniversary Full ERP meeting</b> , Channels Golf Club, Chelmsford, 9:30am – 3:00pm
29 <sup>th</sup> August	<b>ERP Steering Group meeting</b> , RCCE Offices, Feering, 10:00am ( <i>Steering Group members only</i> ) <b>Community Action Group meeting</b> , RCCE Offices, Feering, 2:30pm
14 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>EERF meeting</b> , NFU Offices, Newmarket, 9:30am – 1:00pm
10 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>Full ERP meeting</b> , venue TBC, 9:30am – 1:00pm <b>Steering Group meeting</b> after lunch at 2:00pm ( <i>Steering Group members only</i> )
19 <sup>th</sup> December	<b>ERP Steering Group meeting</b> , RCCE Offices, Feering, 10:00am ( <i>Steering Group members only</i> )
30 <sup>th</sup> January 2013	<b>EERF meeting</b> , venue TBC, 9:30am – 1:00pm

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Compiled and edited by Daisy Martlew, Rural Community Council of Essex.

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