

Economic

Local Enterprise Partnership Network established

A new [national network for local enterprise partnerships \(LEPs\)](#) is to be set up, bringing together a diverse range of local businesses. The network, to be chaired by the Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce David Frost, will provide opportunities for local business leaders to share ideas, information and solve problems to promote economic growth across the country.

Support grows for new Enterprise Zones

Plans for new [Enterprise Zones](#) across England have received widespread support from the business community. The 21 Enterprise Zones, to be created within LEPs, will have simplified planning rules, super-fast broadband and tax breaks for businesses. Among those welcoming the plans are the British Chamber of Commerce, the CBI, the Federation of Small Businesses and entrepreneurs James Dyson and James Averdieck.

Communities

Wrabness benefits from Big Society Fund

A [community shop in Wrabness](#) has been awarded a £6, 000 grant from Essex County Council's Retail Enterprise Fund, part of the Council's £1.4 million Big Society Fund. [RCCE](#) also played a significant role in supporting the shop, providing £3, 500 LAA/Local Transport Plan 'Access to Services' funding and giving advice throughout the process. The shop, which closed at the end of March due to the retirement of its proprietors, will be run by 33 volunteers from the local community.

New fair deal for voluntary and community groups

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has announced a [new 'social responsibility' deal](#) which will request that councils give greater support to voluntary and community groups, whilst cutting the red tape that Ministers believe prevents councils serving their local community. Support from councils will include clearer communication on funding, assistance in shaping the future of local groups and consulting them on how to improve the service.

Environment

£110 million revamp for rivers

The Government has announced a [new £110 million fund](#) which will be used to revamp rivers in England and Wales. The money will be used to kick start a restoration worth at least £600 million, which will improve the

health of more than 880 lakes, streams and other water bodies and boost local involvement in caring for blue spaces. £92 million will be provided over the next four years to improve water catchments to allow wildlife to thrive. An additional £18 million will be provided this year to help farmers protect water courses from agricultural pollution.

Future for allotments secure

The [Department for Communities and Local Government](#) has responded to claims in the *Independent on Sunday* that the review of local government's statutory duties could affect allotments. A spokesperson for the Department said "This is simply untrue we will not remove statutory protections for allotments or any frontline services".

Changes to Warm Front scheme

The [Warm Front scheme](#), which installs insulation and heating improvements to make homes on certain income-related benefits more energy efficient, has announced a new set of eligibility criteria. Qualifying households can get improvements worth up to £3, 500, or £6, 000 where oil central heating and other alternative technologies are recommended. The scheme is now open for applications.

Other News

Digital Switchover Community Work

Rural Community Council of Essex has enlisted the help of volunteers, Village Agents and staff to ensure that people in most need are not left with a bank screen when the Anglia TV region switches to digital in July. The [Digital Switchover Help Scheme Community Work](#) helps older and disabled people who may find the switch difficult. Each team member has been trained to cover a number of villages in the locality, engaging with local organisations and services that are most likely to interface with eligible people.

Dates for your diary

12 th May	Environment Action Group meeting, 10:00am at RCCE Offices, Feering
13 th May	Economic Action Group meeting, 10:00am at RCCE Offices, Feering
27 th May	ERP Steering Group meeting, 10:00am at RCCE Offices, Feering
20 th July	Full Essex Rural Partnership meeting, venue tbc

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