

# ESSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS



## COUNTY UPDATE

No. 46

July 2007

### Calor Essex Village of the Year 2007 and Best Kept Village Competitions

#### CELEBRATION TIME FOR ESSEX VILLAGES

**Ashdon** a village steeped in history and set within the rolling hills of the boulder clays of NE Essex is celebrating after claiming the top prize in this year's **Calor Essex Village of the Year Competition**. Second Place was achieved by **Helions Bumpstead** and **Wickhams Bishops** was in 3rd Place.

#### Calor Best Kept Village in Essex Competition 2007

Class 1 - Danbury	Runner Up - Writtle
Class 2 - Theydon Bois	Runner Up - Coggeshall
Class 3 - Ashdon	Runner Up - Great Waltham
Class 4 - Hempstead	Runner Up - Fyfield
Class 5 - Messing	Runner Up - Little Braxted

**Ashdon** deserves special praise, winning it's first ever Village of the Year title and finishing 1st in Class 3, for the second consecutive year, in the Best Kept Village contest. All prize winners received their awards at the RCCE's Annual General Meeting on 11th July 2007.

Best New Entry: **Wickhams Bishops**

Merit Awards: **Great Bentley, Great Wakering, Helions Bumpstead, Kelvedon, Rivenhall End and West Bergholt.**

#### Best Kept Churchyard 2007 [sponsored by Lodge & Sons (Builders) Ltd]

Winner: **St Andrews, Hempstead.** 2nd Prize: **St James, Greenstead Green.**  
Highly Commended: **St Mary & St Christopher, Panfield**

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This update is available free to all members of the Essex Association of Local Councils.

Membership of the EALC is open to all Parish Councils, Parish Meetings & Town Councils.

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### Office Opening Hours

Monday to Thursday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Friday:	9.00am to 4.00pm

Visits to the office of the EALC are available by prior appointment, this will ensure that the correct person is available to assist with your enquiry.

*All communications by letter or email to the EALC will be acknowledged within 5 working days.*

*Please inform us as soon as possible if no acknowledgement is received.*

## ESSEX TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

### ESSEX EQUALS SEVEN

You will find enclosed with this mailing a pink flyer for Essex Equals Seven which will start on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007. This is the fast track mentoring course for the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) and Quality Parish Status.

There are still funds available through the Clerks Training Bursary and also EALC hope to go out shortly with their next RSCP Grant fund which will cover training also.

If anyone has any queries or would like further information please do not hesitate to give me a ring.



### BUDGET & PRECEPT COURSE 12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2007

There are still places available for this Course which will now cover all sizes of Council – small, medium and large. Have you new Councillors who have not been involved in the process before? Have you new Finance Committee members who should attend?

For a place, please return the appropriate page of the flyer or telephone the office.

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUR VILLAGE 9<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2007

The flyer for this Course will come out in the August mailing. If your village is thinking about undertaking a **Village Design Statement** or **Parish Plan** this is the ideal course to get grounding on the way forward, on getting community involvement and funding!

## Employed or Self-employed?

**Employee:** If you can answer 'Yes' to all of the following questions, you are probably an employee.

- You have a recognised role at the place where you work - for instance, people may report to you, or you may be listed in the phone book.
- Do you have to do the work yourself?
- Can someone tell you at any time what to do, where to carry out the work or when and how to do it?
- Do you work a set amount of hours?
- Can someone move you from task to task?
- Are you paid by the hour, week, or month?
- Can you get overtime pay or bonus payment?

**Self-employed:** If you can answer 'Yes' to all of the following questions, it will usually mean you are self-employed.

- Can you hire someone to do the work for you or engage helpers at your own expense?
- Do you risk your own money?
- Do you provide the main items of equipment you need to do your job, not just the small tools many employees provide for themselves?
- Do you agree to do a job for a fixed price regardless of how long the job may take?
- Can you decide what work to do, how and when to do the work and where to provide the services?
- Do you regularly work for a number of different people?
- Do you have to correct unsatisfactory work in your own time and at your own expense?

### **Tax and National Insurance contributions**

**Employee:** It will normally be your employer's responsibility to deduct tax and National Insurance contributions from your pay under PA YE and pay it to the Inland Revenue.

**Self-employed:** You are responsible for your own tax and National Insurance contributions. If there is any doubt at all contact HM Revenue and Customs for written confirmation of the action your council takes.

The full text from the HM Revenue and Customs Booklet IR56 can be found on the HMRC website. [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

The EALC also has Guidance Note 41 A Clerk's Employment Status - Employed or Self-Employed available **Free of Charge** via email. [info@ealc.gov.uk](mailto:info@ealc.gov.uk).

*If you are concerned about the calculation and deduction of tax and National Insurance contributions there are companies that will do the work for you. The EALC uses Acumen.*

***The EALC has not yet received the new Pay Scales for 2007/2008, as soon as they are available we will forward the information.***

## Essex Environment Trust

Essex Environment Trust is able to provide funding, received as contributions from landfill operators, through the Landfill Communities Fund, for environmental improvements and community projects within the county of Essex that satisfy the requirements of the Landfill Tax Regulations 1996 as amended.

The Trust is an approved environmental body and is a non-profit making company, limited by guarantee. The Trust is not controlled by any local authority, landfill operator or company.

### **Who can apply?**

Most applications are expected to be made by amenity societies, trusts, charitable bodies, PCCs, "Friends of" groups, preservation societies or by local authorities (for non-statutory provision) at the parish, town, district, borough or county level, or by other authorities.

Total funding of projects agreed by The Essex Environmental Trust up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 amounted to £6,520,402.

These projects include:

- **PARC – Great Notley** £8,360 for the building of a playground suitable for 5-13 year old children with a wide range of disabilities.
- **Aldham Parish Church** £10,000 for the screening of the base of the church tower to create new space for facilities. The Trust awarded this project a Certificate of Merit.
- **Ongar Pocket Park** £9,000 for a new play area for children of all ages. The need was identified as a result of a survey of local residents.
- **Little Burstead Village Hall** £10,000 towards the total refurbishment of the village hall. The Trust also awarded this project a Certificate of Merit.
- **Leaden Roding Primary School** received £10,000 towards the cost of an all weather sports pitch, for the benefit of the local community.

For more information visit: [www.essexenvironmenttrust.org.uk](http://www.essexenvironmenttrust.org.uk)



## The Standards Board for England

The Standards Board is producing for an audio version of the Parish and Town Council Model Code of Conduct it should be available from mid-August.

View Frequently Asked Questions at: [www.standardsboard.gov.uk/TheCodeofConduct/frequentlyaskedquestionsabouttheCode/](http://www.standardsboard.gov.uk/TheCodeofConduct/frequentlyaskedquestionsabouttheCode/)

**SOUTH ESSEX CATCHMENT FLOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN DRAFT CFMP  
CONSULTATION**

An important part of the development of the CFMP is to formally assess policies in a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (SI 2004/1633), and European Community Directive on *"the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment"* (2QQM42IEC), the Environment Agency are also consulting on the scope of the environmental factors we are considering in the CFMP.

There is a public exhibition on **Thursday 19th July 2007** from 2.00pm to 6.00pm at the Ashingdon Suite, Essex County Hotel, Aviation way, Southend-on-Sea, at which the Environment Agency will be able to explain more fully what the CFMP says about current and future flood risk in South Essex. This exhibition is open to everyone who lives and works in the area.

The Environment Agency is consulting on the Draft CFMP until **Monday 24th September 2007**. Please send responses to the address shown in the summary document, or e-mail them to [seesexcfmp@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:seesexcfmp@environment-agency.gov.uk). All feedback will be collated and taken into account before the Final Plan is published.

If you require copy of the summary document please contact:  
**Sue Brown, Strategic & Development Planning Officer 01473 706723.**

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**Request from Rayleigh Town Council**

**CHAIRMAN'S CHARITY**

Rayleigh Town Council would like to know if any other Parish/Town Council's have a Chairman's Charity each year. If so, how are funds raised and what legal power is this under?

Please reply directly to:

Kerry Cumberland  
Town Clerk  
10 Bellingham Lane  
Rayleigh  
Essex  
SS6 7ED  
[Rayleigh.towncouncil@btopenworld.com](mailto:Rayleigh.towncouncil@btopenworld.com)  
Tel 01268 741880

## Healthier Communities and Older People Bulletin

The first Healthier Communities and Older People Bulletin, which identifies key messages from the Essex Local Area Agreement Healthier Communities and Older People Steering Group, has been published.

### ***Smoke Free Essex***

On 1 July England will go smoke free. This will affect all enclosed public spaces and will be a great boost for colleagues working to reduce smoking in Essex. For further information visit [www.smokefreeengland.co.uk](http://www.smokefreeengland.co.uk)

### ***Joint Strategic Needs Assessment***

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment locally will draw on the rich data sources already available within Essex County Council, Health, Districts and Boroughs to produce a detailed picture of the needs of those we serve across Essex. The plan is to complete work by September to inform the developing Essex Sustainable Community Strategy and in turn the LAA. The SNA will identify absolute and relative needs of different client groups at super output area to allow best use of resources to meet local needs

### ***Health Profiles***

Health profiles for each District will be published on 22 June. These set out key health data for local areas and will be a useful resource for all partners addressing health and well-being across the county.

### ***Community Well-being and Older People's Board***

The Healthier Communities and Older People Steering Group will be replaced with a Community Well-being Board. Proposals for this board will be considered by the Essex Partnership Executive Group in July and we will then be contacting Local Strategic Partnerships to ask for nominations for membership.

The first priorities of the Community Well-being and older people's board will include developing the following:

- Community Well-being Strategy
- Strategy for Later Life in Essex
- Prevention Strategy

### ***Prevention Strategy***

Age Concern is leading on work to develop a prevention strategy. This will focus on how universal services can support people to live at home without the need for intensive social care packages. As part of this work we are looking at the advice and information available to the public and frontline staff about these services. This will build on a piece of work undertaken by the Essex Libraries Service with Basildon Older People Planning group which identified what information older people would like to receive.

If you would like any further information about any of these items, please contact: [deborah.freeman@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:deborah.freeman@essexcc.gov.uk)

## About IMMOBILISE

Immobilise is a free service that allows you to record the details of as many of your possessions as you wish on a secure, offsite inventory. If you wish you can upgrade your free account and add photographs and certificates of ownership.

It is the largest service of its type with over 15 million registered users, 22 million items registered, and over 16 million stolen items recorded.

The recorded information can help you after loss, theft or fire to complete insurance claims, report stolen or lost property to the Police and mobile phone networks.



Businesses of any size can register company assets such as mobile phones, laptops etc on one company account.

Uniquely via your Immobilise account UK users can flag any registered item as lost or stolen and this appears, (complete with pictures if you have recorded them) on the UK National Police Stolen Property Database allowing them to identify you as the owner of the stolen property and return it to you.

For more information visit: [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)



## Play 4 Play

Children's Fund Essex is leading the co-ordination of play strategies across Essex, this included a consultation and participation project called Play 4 Play which involved capacity building as well as direct service delivery.

Children's Fund Essex worked with Mapalim to find out what over 12,000 children, young people and their families thought about play, what they play and what they want to play, what stops them from playing and how they would like plans for play in their district to be developed.

Play 4 Play was a huge and significant project, the findings of which are feeding into play strategies and the Children and Young People's Plan. Children and young people are part of our communities and therefore these findings should also inform strategies and policies across Essex.

If you wish to receive a cd which has all the district reports, children and young people's versions, an evaluation of the project and many other useful documents regarding play, please contact [childrensfundadmin@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfundadmin@essexcc.gov.uk) with your postal address.

## Environmental Information Regulations

The new Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) have now been in operation for over two and a half years.

Defra is the government department responsible for the EIRs and the Environmental Information Unit provides advice and guidance via phone, email and web site. Defra have produced two leaflets on the EIRs. One leaflet is for public authorities and the other for public authorities to give to members of the public. They are available from Defra's website and can be freely downloaded.

A Quick Reference Guide – for public authorities <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/opengov/eir/pdf/leaflet-publicauthorities.pdf>

How Can They Help? – for the public <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/opengov/eir/pdf/leaflet-public.pdf>

For more information please contact:

Environmental Information Unit,

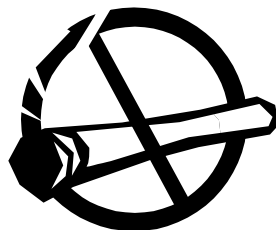
Defra, Area 1E, 3-8 Whitehall Place, LONDON. SW1A 2HH.

EIU Helpline: 020 7270 8885 Direct Tel: 020 7270 8884 Fax: 020 7270 8970

Email: [environmentalinformationunit@DEFRA.GSI.GOV.UK](mailto:environmentalinformationunit@DEFRA.GSI.GOV.UK)

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## No Smoking Legislation



A reminder to Parish Councils from Jane Coleman – Clerk to Feering Parish Council.

This legislation also applies to bus shelters provided they have a back, sides and a roof.

If you do not have community buildings it may not have occurred to you – as it didn't to Jane!!

## Essex Branch SLCC

On Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June, members of the SLCC Essex branch enjoyed an evening at 'Easton Lodge', a splendid house with its history dating from 1597. Mr. Brian Creasey, the current owner of the property, gave a fascinating talk on the origins of a country residence at this site along with its very rich and colourful history.

In 1590 a gentleman by the name of Henry Maynard received a gift from Queen Elizabeth I, of one thousand acres of land for services rendered. This commenced the planning and building of Easton Lodge, an Elizabethan mansion eventually completed in 1597. Since this time many royal visitors have stayed at Easton Lodge, the property became part of the "Marlborough House Set", liaisons between Henry's daughter Evelyn Maynard (Darling Daisy) and the Prince of Wales regularly occurred at the property.

During the war years the house was requisitioned by the War Ministry, several years after this time Brian Creasey purchased the house, from its then owner, in a very poor condition. He and his family camped out in the garden until such time as the house was habitable. Since this time the Creasey family have worked tirelessly with real passion to restore and refurbish the house that currently stands within splendid gardens. The gardens boast many native trees which nestle amongst formal lawns and borders, a yew walk, an Italian garden, a Japanese garden and a 'pleached' lime avenue all feature in this magnificent setting.

The evening concluded with meal at a local hostelry, The Stag at Little Easton, a very pleasant country pub in quiet surroundings. A good time was had by all !!



## COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT THIRD SECTOR STRATEGIC PARTNERS SCHEME

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) aims to establish strategic partnering relationships with organisations that pursue objectives which are in line with their priorities and who operate at a national level in supporting local action. CLG is inviting Expressions of Interest from suitable third sector organisations and partnerships to be considered for strategic partner status and funding.

For full details visit:

[www.governmentfunding.org.uk/VCSLaunch.aspx?SCHEME\\_ID=12-5106](http://www.governmentfunding.org.uk/VCSLaunch.aspx?SCHEME_ID=12-5106)





*The Braintree District Partnership*

Our Issues, Options and Choices Event on the 7<sup>th</sup> June was very successful and we want to say a big thank you to everyone who attended or who supported us in other ways.

We have now prepared a report that brings together all the groups' discussions from that evening. We would welcome your comments on this especially if you were not able to attend on the 7<sup>th</sup> June. All the information gathered will influence the Local Development Framework and the Braintree District Sustainable Community Strategy.

By September we should have a shared Vision statement based on your feedback and information from many other sources that will form the basis of further work. Over the following few months we will work with partners to draw up a set of objectives and a delivery plan (the social and economic issues) and the Preferred Options Document (the Local Development Framework spatial planning element) that will help to fulfill our Vision of the District. In January and February next year we will be asking as many people and organisations as possible for their views on what we have produced before we finalise that stage of our plans. We will retain your contact details so that we will be able to involve you in our consultations. If you do not wish to be contacted again please let us know.

If you would like further information on the process please contact Lynn Marston tel.: 01376 551414 or e-mail: [lynn.marston@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:lynn.marston@braintree.gov.uk) or Paul Munson tel.:01376 551414 or email: [paul.munson@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:paul.munson@braintree.gov.uk).



### **Burial Law and Policy in the 21st Century: The Way Forward**

Responses were received in January, by the Ministry of Justice, to the consultation paper "Burial Law and Policy in the 21st Century: the need for a sensitive and sustainable approach".

On 5<sup>th</sup> June Ministers made a written statement in both Houses of Parliament announcing the way in which the Government wishes to take forward the proposals for burial law reform in England and Wales. A Government response to the burial law consultation paper has been published.

The document can be seen at: [www.justice.gov.uk/publications/policvreports.htm](http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/policvreports.htm).





The following are articles from the National Association's Direct Information Service. This is a fortnightly newsletter containing a round up of all the news and special sections on health & safety, documents & publications and legal issues.

For more information about the **Direct Information Service** please visit:  
[www.nalc.gov.uk/publications/dis/index](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/publications/dis/index)

## **Information from NALC DIS.**

### **658/11 - Ministers must devolve local transport powers to councils, according the Local Government Association.**

Cllr David Sparks, chair of the LGA's Transport and Regeneration Board, said: "Congestion is a national problem, but the solutions must be found locally.

"The Government has said that it will only embark on a national programme of road pricing if public opinion is behind them. If it is looking to encourage local authorities to set up local road pricing schemes, those schemes need to convince local people that the benefits of road pricing will outweigh the costs.

"Local road-pricing schemes are not an end in themselves. If people are going to stop using their cars, they will still need to travel. Councils are changing services people use for the better and Ministers must loosen their grip and devolve transport funding and powers to enable them to provide better public transport alternatives.

"Not only must councils be given greater control over local transport infrastructure and over all types of travel, they have to be able to keep any money raised by charges to re-invest in roads, buses and trains and other forms of transport to benefit the local area.

"Partnerships with neighbouring authorities should also be encouraged where it means better services for local people."

### **658/12 - UK's biggest ever survey of the countryside begins**

The biggest and most comprehensive survey of the natural resources of the British countryside has begun.

The Countryside Survey is carried out by a team of over sixty specially trained scientists working for the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

The team will survey over 600 square kilometres of the English, Welsh and Scottish countryside. (A complementary survey is being carried out in Northern Ireland at the same time). They will collect information on soils, small rivers and ponds, plant communities and habitats on farms, woods, heath land and moors.

The Countryside Survey provides a unique audit of UK environmental assets, generating an overall picture of the current status and trends. It can identify possible

drivers of change, and provides evidence to inform policy-makers. This is especially important given the major challenges the countryside faces: climate change, pollution, non-native species and the introduction of new crops including bio fuels.

The first results and analyses from this 2007 survey will be available in autumn 2008.

For more information on the survey visit: [www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk](http://www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk).

### **658/18 - Environment Agency fact sheet for landfill operators on forthcoming changes under Landfill Directive**

The Environment Agency has published a fact sheet to help landfill operators understand their role when changes to landfill regulations, which come into play later this year.

Liz Parkes, head of waste at the Environment Agency, said: "From 30 October 2007, new rules mean waste must be treated before it is disposed of at a landfill site. At the same time, liquid waste will be banned from any landfill.

"For landfill operators this means you will have to the procedures in place, advise your customers of these changes and consider whether you will be able to provide a treatment service for them."

To help explain what needs to be done, the Environment Agency has been working with members of the waste management industry to produce a fact sheet for landfill operators detailing the changes.

Ms Parkes added: "There are many easy ways to treat waste and deliver real environmental improvements. Much of the waste we send to landfill is already treated, however for some wastes more effort is needed. Treatment can simply be separating the waste on site, and recycling one or more of the separated components."

As a landfill operator you should:

- Consider extending your waste management services by becoming involved in sorting/screening waste for recycling, or composting waste
- Consider publicising the requirements by handing or mailing a leaflet to your customers. If you will not be offering waste treatment services to your customers, can you suggest where they might get this service?

Decide how you will check whether waste has been treated. This can include an initial discussion with the waste producer or contractor about the nature of the waste, checking the paperwork with the load and visually inspecting it.

Liz Parkes added: "We know it can sometimes be difficult to determine whether waste has been treated. This makes it good practice to get written confirmation that the waste has been treated either as part of the Duty of Care transfer note or a written declaration.

Our guidance, Treatment of non hazardous waste for landfill, provides an example form that your customers can use to declare what treatment has taken place. It is also good practice to keep a record of this declaration." All the new fact sheets are available to download at Landfill Directive [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/1745440/444663/landfill/](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/1745440/444663/landfill/) or by calling 08708 506 506.658/21 -

## **Annual Conference 2007**

On 5–7 October 2007, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) will host its annual conference and exhibition at the Bournemouth International Centre. This will be the largest event in the UK local community calendar.

This high profile event will bring together over 500 local council clerks, councillors and county officers over the three days of conference, to share experiences and learn about new developments in the sector.

The theme of this year's conference is 'Building the Future of Local Communities'. With the Local Government Bill progressing through parliament, town and parish councils need to ensure that they are ready to take on the challenges and opportunities, which this may provide.

Delegates will have to opportunity to question key speakers from organisations involved in the sector, as well as getting perspectives from councils on the ground.

There will be sessions held on markets, parish planning, partnership working, sustainable communities and climate change, as well as the opportunity to learn from other council's experience in formal best practice sharing sessions, and networking throughout the weekend.

Delegates will also have chance to speak to experts who provide training in the sector with drop in sessions for CiLCA and councillor training.

Alongside the conference is the largest exhibition of its kind, which continues to attract a wide variety of commercial companies as well as public sector organisations and charities.

Throughout the three days of conference, delegates will have numerous opportunities to meet face to face with exhibitors, to see how they can help address the needs of your council.

To book you place at this conference simply complete and return the online booking form visit [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) and click on Conferences and Events. Your accommodation will need to be booked separately. If you are interested in exhibiting at the NALC Annual Conference download our exhibitors pack, or contact Alan Jones on 020 7290 0316.

## **659/8 - New body should not sacrifice the environment in an attempt to make housing affordable**

Thursday 7 June saw the launch of the Government's National Housing and Planning Advisory Unit. Established in response to economist Kate Barker's recommendation, the Unit has been set up to advise regional assemblies on housing and affordability issues.

Kate Gordon, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) senior planning officer said: "It is vital that the Unit avoids simplistic assumptions about house prices and how many homes are built. We have found no evidence to suggest that not enough land is being allocated or that this is the cause of high house prices. Councils are allocating land, and house building has increased, although in many instances developers prefer to build up their land banks rather than build homes."

Research commissioned by CPRE has identified a wide range of factors which affect house prices, including the quality of the neighbourhood, school exam results and interest rates.

Ms Gordon continued: “We are asking the Unit to be realistic about what affects house prices and what the planning system can achieve. Planning does not control interest rates or schools, for example. Where and how development takes place profoundly affects the quality of local neighbourhoods and the local environment – it is important the new body understands this. A narrow economic focus would have devastating consequences for communities and the environment.”

### **659/16 - Councils call for more funding freedom to help the rural poor**

Rural councils should have more freedom to decide which regeneration initiatives are piloted or mainstreamed, it was claimed this week.

A report from the County Councils Network (CCN) said deprivation was getting worse in rural areas with too many socially excluded people cut off from key services.

It argued money for special initiatives should be put into the main funding pot of rural authorities. At present schemes funded through such schemes can close when their funding stream ends giving little incentive to encourage people to use them while they are operating, it said.

The report called on the Commission for Rural Communities to analyse whether countryside areas have lost out when formerly rural-specific funding streams have been mainstreamed.

John Courouble, policy officer for CCN, said: ‘It may be that it is not a justified perception, although I suspect it partly is, but the main thing is to know whether it is happening.’

The study found delivering choice in public services in rural areas was problematic because it was not always financially viable to have more than one service provider.

Latest figures show rural areas are getting poorer with 35,000 more households below the poverty line in 2006 than 2004. The take-up of benefits relative to poverty is lower, which could be down to lower internet usage and remoteness from places where benefits can be claimed. This demonstrated a need for more outlets for benefits and banking services in rural communities, the report said.

While an increase in delivery of services electronically would be helpful to many people in rural areas, steps must be taken to ensure those who do not have access to these technologies become even more excluded.

‘It should be stressed that, for most residents, the countryside is a pleasant place to live – indeed under 10% of residents in sparse areas say that if they moved, they would prefer it to be to a city or large town,’ said the report.

‘However, the vision of the “English rural idyll” can mask serious need and deprivation, both in income terms, and in terms of access to services.’

Strong counties and vibrant rural communities, [www.lga.gov.uk/ccn/backgrounds.htm](http://www.lga.gov.uk/ccn/backgrounds.htm)

## **660/10 - Defra looks into new affordable rural housing programme**

The Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will begin researching a new funding programme to increase affordable rural housing, Barry Gardiner MP, minister for rural affairs, has announced.

The feasibility study will be funded by Defra and led by the Housing Corporation. It will consider the case for a new time limited funding programme to help local organisations to overcome local barriers to the provision of affordable homes in rural areas.

Mr Gardiner MP launched the study at the Commission for Rural Communities “Affordable Rural Housing Commission – One Year On” Conference. The conference marks the anniversary of the publication of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission’s final report. This highlighted the shortage of affordable rural housing and came forward with practical solutions to improve access.

Mr Gardiner said: “I have asked the Housing Corporation to look into how a new fund could improve provision of affordable housing in rural areas. I want this research to focus on outcomes rather than processes. I want to know exactly how such a fund could achieve increased provision of affordable rural homes where they are needed, promote best practice and overcome local barriers.

“The fund would be designed to empower people to work out what is best for their particular parts of rural England rather than take decisions for them. Local people know best what their particular problems are and how best to overcome them.

“The next milestone at the national level will be the Comprehensive Spending Review – where the provision of social housing has been identified as a priority.”

If the study shows that a new funding programme is needed, funding would be subject to the Comprehensive Spending Review, which will report later this year.

The latest figures suggest that good progress has been made in the provision of new affordable homes in rural areas, and the government wants to build on this. In 2005/06 almost 45,000 new units of affordable housing were provided across England. 23% of these new units were provided in rural local authority areas, which mirrors the proportion of the population living in rural areas.

Any potential new funding programme will not dictate solutions but will empower local organisations to find their own answers. This could include new approaches based on local conditions and knowledge or existing mechanisms, such as Rural Housing Enablers.

Responding to the Affordable Rural Housing Commission’s recommendations, the Housing Corporation has also recently set up the Rural Housing Advisory Group, which is looking at innovative ways to increase the supply of affordable homes in rural areas.

Visit [www.defra.gov.uk/rural/arh/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/arh/) for more information.

## 660/15 - Miliband unveils CO2 calculator

An online calculator that enables people to work out their carbon footprint using government-recognised data and calculations has been launched by environment secretary David Miliband MP.

Using the calculator, people can reliably calculate their carbon footprint from home energy, appliances and transport, and choose to calculate either their own personal footprint or their household's. The calculator then develops a personalised action plan for users, with steps they can take to cut their emissions.

Mr Miliband said: "Around two thirds of people are already taking action to try to limit climate change - but there is a lot of confusion about what people can do and how effective those changes actually are. We want to cut through that confusion. This carbon calculator will help people decide what they can do - and be sure it will make a difference. Using it, people can work out the impact of their actions and, with the tailored recommendations provided by the calculator, identify the best way to reduce their footprint.

"This calculator is a real innovation - using up-to-date, authoritative data and recognised calculation methods. As the calculator improves and develops, I want it to become the gold standard for calculating CO2 emissions from individuals and families."

The Act on CO2 calculator can be found at [www.direct.gov.uk/actonCO2](http://www.direct.gov.uk/actonCO2).

## 660/20 - Watchdog calls for flood defence improvements

The Environment Agency could improve England's flood defences by using its resources more efficiently, according to a government watchdog (*Planning Resource*, 18 June 2007).

The Environment Agency estimates that it needs a further £150 million a year to bring all flood defences up to their target condition. But in a report published last week, the National Audit Office (NAO) says the agency could reduce the need for additional funding by improving the cost effectiveness of its work.

The NAO adds that, while the agency's flood management work has improved since 2001, it has failed to meet its goal to ensure that 63% of England's flood defences are kept in their required condition.

In March 2007, only 57% of all flood defences were in such a state, the report says.

Environment Agency: Building and Maintaining River and Coastal Flood Defences in England is available by clicking [www.nao.org.uk/pn/06-07/0607528.htm](http://www.nao.org.uk/pn/06-07/0607528.htm)

### Please note

**Accuracy:** Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, NALC & EALC cannot in any circumstances accept responsibility for errors, omissions or advice given in this publication.

**Web sites:** We do not endorse them or guarantee their authenticity or accuracy.

# Useful Telephone Numbers

Action for Market Towns 0845 6446202	ACAS London 0845 7474747
Action with Communities Rural in Rural England (ACRE) 01285 653477	Association of Councillors 0191 433 3000
Byways & Bridleways Trust 01256 702133	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers 01302 388820
Campaign to Protect Rural England 020 7981 2800	Civic Trust 020 7539 7900
Clerks & Councils Direct 01784 483281	Countryside Agency 01242 533222
Data Protection Act Infoline 01625 545745	DEFRA 0845 9335577
English Heritage 0870 333 1181	Essex County Council Helpline 0845 7430430
Essex Disabled Peoples Association 01245 253400	Essex Heritage Trust 01376 585794
Heritage Lottery Fund 020 7591 6000	Health & Safety Executive Infoline 0845 3450055
Health & Safety Executive Publications 01787 881165	Information Commissioner 01625 545745
Land Registry 020 7917 8888	Local Government Ombudsman  Tony Redmond Local Government Ombudsman Millbank Tower Millbank London SW1 4QP Tel: 020 72174620 Fax: 020 72174621  Email: <a href="mailto:inquiries.london@lgo.aug.uk">inquiries.london@lgo.aug.uk</a>
National Playing Fields Association 020 7833 5360	
Public Works Loan Board 0845 3576610	
Ramblers Association 020 7339 8500	
Rural Community Council of Essex 0844 4773938	
Standards Board for England 0845 078 8181	

# Useful Websites

Association of Play Industries	<a href="http://www.playindustries.org">www.playindustries.org</a>
Awards for All Lottery Grants	<a href="http://www.awardsforall.org.uk">www.awardsforall.org.uk</a>
BAA Stansted	<a href="mailto:www.stanstedgrowing@baa.com">www.stanstedgrowing@baa.com</a>
Council to Protect Rural England (CPREssex)	<a href="http://www.cpressx.org.uk">www.cpressx.org.uk</a>
Data Protection Act	<a href="http://www.dataprotection.gov.uk">www.dataprotection.gov.uk</a>
Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG)	<a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk">www.communities.gov.uk</a>
Details of Rurally Based Enterprises	<a href="http://www.ruralheart.com">www.ruralheart.com</a>
Essex County Council Information Service	<a href="http://www.seamless.org.uk">www.seamless.org.uk</a>
Flood Warning	<a href="http://www.environmentagency.gov.uk/floodwarning">www.environmentagency.gov.uk/floodwarning</a>
General Government Sites	<a href="http://www.direct.gov.uk">www.direct.gov.uk</a>
Grants 4: Essex	<a href="http://www.grants4.info/essex">www.grants4.info/essex</a>
Health & Safety Executive	<a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk">www.hse.gov.uk</a>
Information Commissioner	<a href="http://www.dataprotection.gov.uk">www.dataprotection.gov.uk</a>
Information for Local Government	<a href="http://www.info4local.gov.uk">www.info4local.gov.uk</a>
InspireEast	<a href="http://www.inspire-east.org.uk">www.inspire-east.org.uk</a>
National Association of Farmers Markets	<a href="http://www.farmersmarkets.net">www.farmersmarkets.net</a>
Department for Communities and Local Government	<a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk">www.communities.gov.uk</a>
Public and Community Transport	<a href="http://www.essexcc.gov.uk">www.essexcc.gov.uk</a>
Public Works Loan Board	<a href="http://www.pwlb.gov.uk">www.pwlb.gov.uk</a>
RoSPA Play Safety	<a href="http://www.rospace.com/playsafety">www.rospace.com/playsafety</a>
Rural Community Council	<a href="http://www.essexrcc.org.uk">www.essexrcc.org.uk</a>
Standards Board	<a href="http://www.standardsboard.co.uk">www.standardsboard.co.uk</a>
The Countryside Agency	<a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a>
The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	<a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk">www.defra.gov.uk</a>
The Department of Transport & Local Government	<a href="http://www.dtlr.gov.uk">www.dtlr.gov.uk</a>
Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd	<a href="http://www.wren.org.uk">www.wren.org.uk</a>

# EALC/ETP Diary Dates

2007

August	Intensive CiLCA Exact date to be confirmed	ETP
12th Sept	Budget & Precept	ETP
19th Sept	AGM	EALC
27th Sept	Health & Safety/Fire Safety	ETP
9th Oct	Planning for the Future of your Village or Community	ETP
18th Oct	Councillor Training Day 1	EALC
1st Nov	Council Finance	ETP
2nd Nov	Networking Lunch Event 11am to 2.30pm	EALC/ETP/SLCC
7th Nov	Chairman's Day 3	EALC
13th Nov	Roles & Responsibilities	ETP
29th Nov	Planning day	ETP
5th Dec	Law & Procedures	ETP