

For the week ending 17 February 2012

ACRE News

ACRE produces Community Led Planning Toolkit

ACRE has produced a new toolkit for Community Led Planning which provides step-by-step guidance for communities who want to take action and produce a holistic plan that will guarantee the sustainability and wellbeing of their neighbourhood. The toolkit builds on guidance previously published by ACRE for Local Authorities. [*Making the most of Community Led Planning: a best practice guide for local authorities*](#) showed how local authorities are already supporting this approach to localism by examining the role they can play at each stage of a plan's development. This guidance was endorsed by a range of different national organisations and included a foreword by Greg Clark, Minister for Decentralisation at Communities and Local Government.

To view the toolkit, please visit the [ACRE website](#).

RCAN News

Community Impact Bucks create trading arm

The trustees of Community Impact Bucks have recognised that the funding environment within which the organisation operates has significantly changed with the reduction in public sector funding and the move to commissioning for services rather than the award of grants. As a result Community Impact Bucks (Trading) Ltd, a company limited by share and wholly owned by Community Impact Bucks, has been established with the purpose of developing a significant self-generating income for the charity. Ideally the charity would wish to see an income from the trading company of around £100,000 within a two to three year period. Whilst the charity may wish to utilise the trading company for financial risk management reasons, its primary concern is enabling the trading company to generate a significant free income stream.

For more information, please visit the [Community Impact Bucks website](#).

Rural Community Council of Essex produce Neighbourhood Planning Guide

The Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) has produced a Neighbourhood Planning Guide in partnership with the Essex Planning Officers Association and the Essex Community Led Planning Officer Network. This guide draws on RCCE experience of supporting other types of community led planning but it is important to remember that the process of Neighbourhood Planning is still being tested. They found that it is essential that the local planning authority is involved throughout the process; however, each local authority will have different resources for neighbourhood planning.

To view the Neighbourhood Planning Guide, please visit the [RCCE website](#).

Key voluntary sector organisations to collaborate under single leadership

The collaboration of Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council (HWRCC) and East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS) will see both organisations operate under the leadership of Chief Executive, Penny Brown, in the future. HWRCC and ERVAS have for many years been the two primary voluntary sector 'infrastructure' organisations in the East Riding; providing complementary packages of support to the diverse organisations and groups. Penny has led Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council for over three years and during this time ERVAS and HWRCC have nurtured a positive and mutually beneficial working relationship. Both organisations have strong working relationships with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council and the Partnership will develop this further, as the joint management will provide a platform for further development of collaborative working. For more information, please visit the [HWRCC website](#).

Suffolk ACRE's good neighbour schemes and group oil buying scheme

Suffolk ACRE was recently given the opportunity to highlight two of their projects in interviews with Mark Murphy on BBC Radio Suffolk. On Friday 10 February 2012, [Nat Bocking, Community Support and Consultation Officer spoke to Mark Murphy](#) regarding Suffolk ACRE's good neighbour schemes and on Monday 13 February 2012, [Roger Turkington, Operations Director, spoke](#) about Suffolk ACRE's group oil buying scheme and the need for volunteer co-ordinators for the most hard to reach people who use oil as their heating fuel.

News

East Sussex calls for faster broadband

Rural communities in East Sussex are being urged to join the push for superfast broadband. Residents and businesses are being asked to join an East Sussex County Council campaign for better access to reliable and faster broadband within the next two years. The issue was given a boost after the council agreed to provide £15m from its own budget to add to a proposed £10.6m grant from government. It said this could see nearly £26m available to help the county get up to speed. The aim is to ensure that rural and hard to reach areas – which may not otherwise be commercially viable – are on the priority list to be upgraded.

For more information, please visit the [Rural Services Network website](#).

Tens of thousands of households in 'group buying' energy move

The consumer group, Which? is collecting signatures from people who are fed up with high energy bills, which average £1,260 a year. Which? will then invite the UK's energy suppliers to take part in a so-called "reverse auction", in which participants try to outbid each other with lower prices. The supplier that commits to the lowest energy price will win the petition's signatories as customers. The campaign, which is called [The Big Switch](#), is that the more people sign up to the list, the lower the prices will be. The campaign, which was welcomed by ministers, works along the same principles of group buying sites such as Groupon.

For more information, please visit the [Telegraph website](#).

Retain rural watchdog, say Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats have urged the government to abandon plans to abolish the Commission for Rural Communities. Lib Dem rural spokesman Andrew George MP said the government should instead beef up its plans for rural policy by retaining the agency. Mr George, who represents the West Cornwall constituency of St Ives and the Isles of Scilly, was responding to a government consultation. Defra has been consulting on its plans for the future of the Commission for Rural Communities – the independent rural watchdog. Mr George said the Commission for Rural Communities was an 'independent voice' for the countryside and should be retained.

For more information, please visit the [Rural Services Network website](#).

Nesta announces first grants from £10m Giving Fund

The first round of funding from the £10m Innovation in Giving Fund from the Cabinet Office and Nesta has been announced. The first organisations to receive funding includes Buzzbnk, an online crowd-funding platform supporting charities and social enterprises, which has been awarded a £50,000 investment to enable full mobile capability for the platform. The Innovation in Giving Fund was designed to support innovations that have the potential to deliver a significant increase in the giving and exchange of time, assets, skills, resources and money to achieve social goals and public benefit. It is being administered by Nesta on behalf of the Cabinet Office. For more information, please visit the [Civil Society magazine website](#).

High risks for young rural drivers

Young rural drivers are more likely to be involved in a car crash than urban youngsters, reveals a study. Younger country motorists are 37% more likely to be involved in an injury collision than their urban counterparts, it found. The study, by Road Safety Analysis, reveals how risk levels for young drivers vary according to where they live. Called *Young Drivers', Road Risks and Rurality*, it compares the risk of collision involvement each year by local authority area, showing the risk rates for young drivers.

For more information, please visit the [Rural Services Network website](#).

Volunteering England and Forestry Commission cement partnership

The Chief Executives of Volunteering England and the Forestry Commission have signed a memorandum of agreement firming their commitments to work together to increase volunteering. The Forestry Commission, the government department responsible for overseeing the protection and expansion of Britain's woodlands, provides a range of volunteering opportunities from working in education to maintenance, through conservation and office work. The signing of the agreement between the Commission and Volunteering England cements a commitment to expand the range and infrastructure around volunteering opportunities in England's forests and woods.

For more information, please visit the [Civil Society magazine website](#).

Lottery income could increase by £1bn in five years, says DCMS

A spike in National Lottery ticket sales could lead to more than £1bn extra going to good causes over the next five years, according to revised Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) projections. The DCMS is predicting that if current strong National Lottery ticket sales trends continue, National Lottery income could increase to £1.626bn in 2012/13 - £232m above what the department had projected in September 2010.

For more information, please visit the [Civil Society magazine website](#).

Two partner bodies launched to aid collaboration on contracts

A start-up co-operative is using its share of the £30m Transforming Local Infrastructure Fund to develop its capacity to help civil society organisations adapt to the demands of contract bidding, and to collaborate with a new social business partner to this aim. The Big Society Co-operative (BSC), which will officially launch in April, was awarded £600,000 by the Office for Civil Society to help with its mission to "assist and promote civil society organisations and act as a conduit to share and promote best practice in innovative working between civil society, public and private sector organisations". It plans to act as a national umbrella body for civil society support, giving access to a wide range of information, advice and support via a new 'one stop shop' web platform, which is already live.

For more information, please visit the [Civil Society magazine website](#).

Consultations

Government to open up a multi-million pound market to deliver National Citizen Service

The National Citizen Service (NCS) programme brings together young people from very different backgrounds with a common objective; to give something back to their local community and achieve something of which they can be proud. NCS is part of the government's aim to build a more cohesive, responsible and engaged society. To find out how to make it easier for organisations to get involved, the government has started a period of market consultation to help inform the procurement strategy for NCS delivery from 2014 onwards. There [is a survey](#) asking about what role organisations think they could play, the challenges and risks, how organisations could help reduce the costs of delivering the programme, as well as about working with young people direct. The closing date for responses is Friday, 16 March.

For more information, please visit the [Cabinet Office website](#).

Funding

New £60,000 Community Challenge Prize now open to applications

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in partnership with the Co-operatives UK, have launched the 'Buy Better Together Challenge', which is a new initiative that aims to help inspire new models of community buying, stimulate enterprise and promote shared learning. Both Co-operatives UK and BIS have contributed £30k to the prize fund. Community buying, which involves groups of individuals combining their buying power to purchase goods or services together and get better deals from shops and other suppliers, can help businesses spread their overheads and in turn lowers costs for consumers. The 'Buy Better Together Challenge' £60k pot will go towards training and mentoring for stand out projects and includes £15k for the overall winner. Applications are open from 21 February 2012 to 15 May 2012.

For more information, please visit the [BIS website](#).

Community Buildings grants for heating, lighting and insulation

In partnership with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), Western Power Distribution is running a £50,000 grant scheme for communities in the Midlands, South West and South Wales to help reduce their energy use. The grant scheme is aimed at helping community groups carry out simple energy efficiency improvements in village halls and community buildings after carrying out their own energy audits. The maximum grant per group is £1,000. Applications will initially be accepted until the end of April 2012, or until the grant pot is exhausted. Applications will be assessed on a rolling basis, and grants for successful applicants will be awarded on a 'first come, first served' basis.

For more information, please visit the [CSE website](#).

Inspired Facilities Grants for developing sports in local communities

Places People Play, Sport England's programme to deliver a London 2012 legacy of increased mass participation in sport, is now investing £50 million of National Lottery funding in up to 100 community sports projects between 2012 and 2014. The Inspired Facilities Fund is for any group looking to refurbish or upgrade their sports facility or convert an existing building into a community venue for sport. Community and voluntary organisations and parish and town councils can apply for grants between £20,000 and £60,000 before the deadline of Monday, 2 April 2012.

For more information, please visit the [Inspired Facilities website](#).

Think Big grant gives young people the opportunity to make a difference in their community

Think Big, being run by O2 in partnership with UK Youth and the National Youth Agency, is offering £300 grants to young people between 13-25 years old that wish to start a project that will make a difference in their local community. Support and training is also provided to supplement the cash grants.

For more information, please visit the [Think Big website](#).

Publications

Economic case for planning reforms debunked

A new study into the costs and benefits of the planning system finds that the Government's proposed reforms are likely to have little or no effect on growth and could even undermine public wellbeing. The new report, *Inexpensive Progress?*, commissioned jointly by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), the National Trust and the RSPB, examines the fundamental question at the heart of the planning reform debate – 'Is the planning system holding back economic growth?' The report, prepared by Vivid Economics, finds that although there have been a few studies of the costs of the planning system, the claims made on the back on them have been overstated - and very little has been done to measure the benefits that good planning delivers.

To view the report, please visit the [CPRE website](#).

New report from Carnegie UK Trust

Last summer, the Carnegie UK Trust carried out a short research study to explore the landscape of rural development networks across the UK and Ireland. The purpose of this research was to identify the range and diversity of networks in existence. The study also sought to explore the benefits that membership of these networks brought to their users. The Carnegie UK Trust has now published the results of their study. The key findings include a large number of rural development networks exist across the UK and Ireland, each differ in terms of size, scope and staffing. Most networks identified in their research were local or national networks, and a few were cross national networks. They also found that those who used networks described a range of positive benefits including increased confidence in tackling local issues, such as campaigning to save local services and engage in public consultations. It is also demonstrated in the report that networks were concerned about funding in the current climate and some provided evidence that reductions in funding were already having an effect.

The report is available from the Carnegie website as either an [executive summary](#) or the [full report](#).

Building Safe, Active Communities: Strong foundations by local people

Baroness Newlove was appointed as the Government's Champion for Active, Safer Communities in October 2010. Since then, she has worked with communities across the country to find out what grassroots activists want and need. This third report is a manual for communities, which brings together new ideas that have been proven to work, case studies from different areas and it highlights resources which can provide support to communities that want to do more. The report also sets out progress on Baroness Newlove's three priorities - tackling problem drinking, turning the civil service into a 'civic' service, and finding a web 'hub' for community activists to use - and outlines a £1 million new Alcohol Fund to help local agencies, businesses and local people to come together and tackle problem drinking in partnership.

To view the report, please visit the [Department for Communities and Local Government website](#).

Small business user guide for measuring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has produced guidance which explains how organisations can measure and report their green house gas (GHG) emissions, as well as set targets to reduce them. The guidance is aimed at all sizes of business as well as public and third sector organisations. To view the guidance, please visit the [Defra website](#).

Free training launched to boost business mentors

A new online training tool has been launched to help get thousands of experienced business people mentoring small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The new training tool is part of the Get Mentoring scheme launched in November that is recruiting 15,000 new mentors to help entrepreneurs fulfil their potential. The tool, provided by the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI), is free to use, which makes it even easier for people to get mentoring and join the growing network of volunteer business mentors. To view the training tool, please visit the [Get Mentoring website](#).

Events

Village SOS National Conference – 27 February 2012

The Big Lottery Fund's Village SOS National Conference will draw on the widest range of experts from across the rural and social enterprise sectors to give communities the support they need to rejuvenate their villages by setting up community enterprises - from shops and pubs, to local food and transport projects. UK Chair of the Big Lottery Fund, Peter Ainsworth, will be joined on the day by leaders of the sector, including Plunkett Foundation's Chief Executive Peter Couchman, Co-operatives UK's Chair, David Button, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)'s Chief Executive, Sylvia Brown and Locality's Chief Executive, Steve Wyler, all of whom are partners on the Big Lottery Fund's Village SOS programme which provides the most comprehensive support ever available to communities setting up community enterprises across the UK.

The UK's community enterprise pioneers will also be present to inspire delegates to start up their own enterprises, like Fordhall Farm, the country's first ever farm to be owned by its community, and Cybermoor, a revolutionary broadband community enterprise that has transformed broadband services for the most remote parish in England. They will be joined by specialists across the spectrum, from business and funding experts to planning and marketing professionals. This free-to-attend event is the essential conference for anyone with an interest in rural communities and community enterprise. It will feature specialist workshops on topics like business planning and accessing finance, debates on issues facing rural communities and how they can be overcome, and the chance to have your say on what you need to rejuvenate your village.

For more information, please visit the [Village SOS website](#).

INCA Industry Day - 28 February

Many local projects are putting forward proposals for the Defra/BDUK Rural Community Fund. Many suppliers are able to help them develop their plans and deploy innovative next generation networks. INCA is designing a 'Marketplace' allowing network builders, business consultants, systems integrators and others to promote their capabilities. INCA members have also proposed a Quality Marque to assist local projects develop their plans according to a pre-defined set of standards. This INCA Industry Day is designed to bring projects and suppliers together. It is aimed at giving anybody promoting a local project the opportunity to meet commercial organisations that can help them. The event also aims to give suppliers the opportunity to learn more about the schemes that are being proposed.

For more information, please visit the [INCA website](#).

Essentials of Community Development Short Course Programme – February & March 2012

This short course programme is presented from the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) in partnership with the University of Gloucestershire. The courses are all quality assured by the University of Gloucestershire and will be delivered at the University's Cheltenham Park campus. For more information, click on the event links below.

- [Collecting & using good quality information](#) - 8 March 2012
- [Exploring alternative approaches to developing sustainable communities](#) - 22 March 2012

Localism, Sustainability and Kick Starting Community Activity – 1 March 2012

At the beginning of March, Norfolk Rural Community Council will be hosting a number of delegates from EU countries as part of a project they are a partner in, called SMART. The project looks at how they can make rural communities sustainable, not just in terms of environmental issues but looking at services, equality, culture, transport and a range of other issues. This event, which is part of the project, aims to provide practical help for communities looking at these issues.

For more information, please visit the [Norfolk RCC website](#).

Connecting Communities – 7 March 2012

Cheshire Community Action is hosting the Connecting Communities event on Wednesday, 7 March. The event will entail seminars covering: starting a business or social enterprise, managing and developing community buildings and assets, funding community projects and marketing through use of social media. The event will offer delegates the chance to take part in an open discussion identifying issues facing local Communities and the opportunity to exhibit group/business activities in its market place. For more information, please visit the [Cheshire Community Action website](#).

Rural Network East Midlands Conference – 22 March 2012

The Rural Network East Midlands is hosting a conference which aims to explore how new policies and initiatives provide opportunities and challenges for rural communities and how Rural Network East Midlands intends to support future rural growth. The event is being held on Thursday, 22 March at Welbeck Estate.

For more information, please contact [Lyn Hage at Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire](#).

Local People, Local Food – 24 April 2012

The Plunkett Foundation, supported by Making Local Food Work, are hosting a one-day conference in central Birmingham which aims to help village or community shops increase turnover and profits from local food by understanding their customers and turning them into genuine and useful supporters. For more information, please visit the [Local People, Local Food website](#).

Building Stronger Communities Conference – 28 April 2012

Community Council for Berkshire (CCB), in partnership with West Berkshire Council and Empowering West Berkshire, is hosting the Building Stronger Communities Conference in Newbury at the end of April 2012. The conference will have a series of workshops around the economy, local assets, the green agenda, funding, social media, working with young people and adult and community learning.

For more information, please visit the [CCB website](#).

Adapting Rural Policy for a Sustainable Future – May 2012

The Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) are hosting their 2012 Policy Conference in Gloucester in May 2012. The conference builds on the innovative conference format developed in previous years to focus attention on understanding the tools and the evidence required to develop more adaptable forms of rural policy. The aim is to encourage participation and integration between academics, practitioners and policy makers in a conference setting. For more information, please visit the [CCRI website](#).

Training

The Localism Act and Neighbourhood Planning – February and March 2012

Community Action Northumberland is hosting a series of events across their county to help people understand about the new planning system, and to prepare for the new opportunities offered by the Localism Act 2011. Each of five venues has already hosted the first session, *An Introduction to Planning*, in January, and will each host the second session, *The Localism Act and Neighbourhood Planning* in either February or March. The events are being sponsored by the government, via the DCLG Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning initiative, which is being administered by CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) and NALC (National Association of Local Councils).

For more information, please visit the [Community Action Northumberland website](#).

Business Advice Workshop – 29 February 2012

Bucks Business First is planning a series of free business advice workshops across the county for the benefit of local business people. The next workshop will take place on 29 February from 4pm until 8pm in Saunderton. Up to 30 advisors will be available for businesses and individuals to visit on a 'drop-in' basis. Visitors will be able to seek advice on subjects ranging from HR to tax, from property to apprentices, from skills to security.

For more information, please visit the [Community Impact Bucks website](#).

Getting to Grips with Localism and Neighbourhood Planning – 29 February 2012

Action for Market Towns (AMT) is hosting this one-day session in York which will focus on the Localism Act and what it means in reality to communities living in and around market towns. AMT, in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council, will aim to give delegates information and the tools to enable them to apply localism in their own area.

For more information, please visit the [AMT website](#).

Buckinghamshire Fixing Fuel Poverty Summit - 12 March 2012

Community Impact Bucks is hosting a Fixing Fuel Poverty Summit which aims to encourage and highlight the benefits of cross-agency and community working such as is being achieved through this winter's Warm Homes, Healthy People project. Invitees include those working in local government and health services, as well as organisations and community groups who have links, or contact with people likely to be at risk of fuel poverty.

For more information, please visit the [Community Impact Bucks website](#).

Neighbourhood Planning Events in Kent – March 2012

Action with Communities in Rural Kent is co-organising four workshops designed to help communities interested in preparing a neighbourhood plan to do so. Three of the events are being operated in partnership with the Kent Association of Local Councils and CPRE Kent, and one is to be delivered with Planning Aid South East. All events are financed through the Department for Communities & Local Government's Involvement in Planning initiative. Events are set for 3rd March (in Elham), 13th March (in Benenden), 16th March (in Otford) and 29th March (in Lenham).

For further details contact info@ruralkent.org.uk or telephone 01303-813790.

Training in low-carbon community-led planning - March and May 2012

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) is running six workshops to explore how communities can plan low-carbon and renewable energy initiatives, such as wind farms or solar projects. The workshops are aimed at community groups themselves, as well as organisations such as local authorities, national parks and third sector organisations who work with communities on local planning or sustainable living initiatives. The training will introduce delegates to the [PlanLoCaL](#) suite of tools which support communities in shaping their own low-carbon future and a more strategic engagement with the planning system. The venues and dates of the first six sessions are Manchester (8 March), Worcester (9 March), Durham (15 March), Horsham (29 March), Salisbury (30 March) and Milton Keynes (8 May).

For more information, please visit the [CSE website](#).

Vacancies

GRCC recruiting Trainee Community Organisers

Trainee Community Organisers will be employed by Locality, the organisation responsible for delivering the national contract for Community Organisers. Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) will act as host for the trainee Community Organisers, providing mentoring, on-the-ground support and office facilities. The other delivery partner is RE:generate (Action to Regenerate Community Trust), who will provide training to Community Organisers on the Root Solution 'Listening Matters' strategy, which it has developed. The closing date for applications is Monday, 27 February with interviews being held at GRCC on Tuesday, 6 March.

For more information, please visit the [GRCC website](#).

AirS seeking a Head of Resources

Action in rural Sussex (AirS) is experiencing a time of change and development and is currently seeking a qualified finance professional with significant charity accounting experience and a hands-on approach to join them as a key member of the Management Team. The successful candidate will have a successful track record of financial and 'back office' management in a similar sized organisation and will relish fresh challenges while being committed to continuous improvement and the promotion of strong partnership working. The closing date for applications is 12 noon on Monday, 5 March with interviews taking place on Thursday, 15 March 2012.

For more information and to apply for the position, please visit the [AirS website](#).

ACAF advertising for two new members

Two new members are needed for the Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF). This independent committee advises the Food Standards Agency on the safety and use of animal feeds, with particular emphasis on protecting human health. New members of the committee are required with knowledge and/or experience in either consumer affairs or farming. Candidates must be strong team workers, able to demonstrate effective written and verbal communication skills and sound judgement, with strong analytical and problem solving skills. As ACAF members they must be able to work in a committee structure and be able to weigh scientific, technical and policy issues outside their own specialist area. The closing date for applications is Monday, 5 March 2012.

For more information, please visit the [Food Standards Agency website](http://www.food.gov.uk).