

RURAL NEWS DIGEST #7

October 2009

Welcome to the latest Leicestershire Rural Partnership Rural News Digest.

National

- **Why Farming Matters More Than Ever (NFU)**

Following on from the highly successful Why Farming Matters campaign, which was launched in 2006, this document highlights why farming now matters more than ever in terms of food production, the environment and the economy, as well as outlining the steps the industry is taking to meet the challenges it faces in the 21st century. The manifesto highlights what the NFU would like to see an incoming Government do to help ensure agriculture is fully equipped to meet those challenges.

Meeting the projected 50% increase in the demand for food by 2030 is a big challenge. This is in the context of limited land supply, levelling off of global productivity increases, climate change and constraints on energy which limit the ability of farmers everywhere to respond to the need for more food. Commitments to agricultural research in developing countries should be supplemented by equivalent efforts in developed countries. The full document can be read at <http://www.whyfarmingmatters.co.uk/x550.xml>

- **Livestock Bulletin 2009 (Savills)**

This bulletin reports that the number of grazing livestock on UK farms is at a historically low level with significant numbers of producers leaving the industry. The growing shortage of breeding animals is leading to a reduced supply of product and contributing towards increased prices. This factor does however create opportunities for commercial livestock units.

There are good opportunities for dairy producers who can secure the highest value contracts for their production, operate large units with good access for collection and have a high level of technical expertise.

There is an increasing need for large-scale beef and sheep producers and collaborative ventures in order to achieve marketing scale. For smaller producers premiums can be obtained via direct retailing, although to achieve this, new skills and premises are required. <http://www.savills.co.uk/research/Report.aspx?nodeID=10786>

- **Soil Strategy for England (DEFRA)**

The new Soil Strategy for England sets out an ambitious vision to improve the sustainable management of soil and tackle degradation within 20 years. It covers a range of sectors including agriculture, land management, planning and construction and provides a strategic framework for action that should facilitate Defra's work with delivery partners.

Building on the First Soil Action Plan for England (2004-2006), the aim is to ensure that England's soils are better protected and managed. The focus is on four main themes: the sustainable use of agricultural soils; the role of soils in mitigating and adapting to climate change; protecting soil functions during construction and development; and preventing

pollution and dealing with historic contamination. The full strategy document can be downloaded at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/land/soil/documents/soil-strategy.pdf>

- **UK Countryside Survey (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology)**

The results of the biggest and most comprehensive survey of England's countryside and its natural resources are unveiled in a report published by the Countryside Survey Partnership. The new results for England show some positive signals for conservation of biodiversity across widespread and common habitats, but these signals become more mixed at the finer scale. Some of the key messages from the survey include:

- An increase in frequency of the plant species used as food by butterfly caterpillars and farmland birds in Broadleaved Woodland and Arable and Horticulture Broad Habitats, as well as along hedgerows.
- Based on vegetation criteria alone, almost 80% of ponds in England were in poor condition in 2007.
- Soil pH (in the upper 15cm) has increased in many Broad Habitats associated with recovery from previous high levels of acid deposition, though the impacts of these changes on vegetation are less obvious.
- The total length of woody linear features decreased by 1.4% and the total length of managed hedgerows decreased by 6.1% between 1998 and 2007, with a large proportion of these managed hedges turning into lines of trees and relict hedges.
- 50% of managed hedges were in good structural condition.

The Countryside Survey results for England in 2007 are available at http://www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk/eng_reports2007.html

- **Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Rural England (Commission for Rural Communities)**

This CRC report uses the most current data available to present a range of key indicators of poverty and social exclusion in rural England in comparison with the equivalent data for urban areas.

In total, there are 37 indicators grouped into 7 sections focussing respectively on low income, work, education, health, housing, services and community.

Of the 36 comparable indicators the report highlights that:

- In 12 indicators rural and urban percentages are similar or the difference is mixed
- In 11 indicators rural percentages are somewhat better than in urban areas
- In 9 indicators rural percentages are much better than their urban equivalents
- In 4 indicators rural percentages are worse than in urban areas

<http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/NPI%20rural%20indicators%202009.pdf>

- **Impact of HM Treasury/Defra's Vision for the Common Agricultural Policy on Agriculture in the UK (Joan Moss, Myles Patton, Lichun Zhang and In Seck Kim(Queen's University Belfast & AgriFood & Biosciences Institute) Julian Binfield and Patrick Westhoff (FAPRI, University of Missouri)**

This study assesses the impact of a variety of policy scenarios. The CAP Health Check changes are predicted to depress UK milk prices but to have little effect on beef, sheep meat, pig, poultry and crop prices. The Doha Reforms would also push milk, beef, pig, and poultry prices down but would reduce sheep production to a degree where sheep numbers in the EU would fall and prices would rise. There would be little impact on the crop sector. Further liberalisation would slightly increase milk prices and drive beef, sheep, pig and poultry prices down but would not have much effect on the crop sector. Ending the Single Farm Payment would increase milk prices slightly, reduce beef and sheep numbers significantly but would have a negligible impact on the pig, poultry and crop sectors. More detail can be found at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/afe/fapri/UKFAPRIWP16.pdf>

- **Energy Strategies for Rural Businesses (RICS)**

The RICS has published new guidance aimed at reducing the environmental impact of rural businesses. Energy Strategies for Rural Businesses has been developed for RICS members advising clients or employers in the rural sector on the development of energy strategies for their estates, land and buildings.

Agriculture, in particular, is a significant contributor to global climate change through the release of greenhouse gases. Emissions arise from not only the use of fossil fuels but also from the by-products of animal digestion, the cultivation of soils and the loss of natural vegetation and forests. http://www.rics.org/site/scripts/press_article.aspx?pressreleaseID=125

- **CLA Manifesto (CLA)**

The CLA's manifesto is a 16-page document that covers all areas of sustainable development under the three themes of Enabling Rural Business, Caring for the Countryside, and Enjoying Our Countryside.

The CLA calls on the next government to develop policies to tackle the twin challenges of food security and environmental security, which will have a positive impact on the rural economy, the environment and society as a whole.

The manifesto deals with goods and services that land managers deliver and are core to the future of life in Britain: putting food on our tables, safeguarding our environment, tackling global warming. http://www.cla.org.uk/Policy_Work/Manifesto_2009/

- **A Typology of the Smaller Rural Towns of England (Professor John Shepherd, Rural Evidence Research Centre, Birkbeck College, University of London)**

This research has developed a classification – or typology – of rural towns from 1,500 to 40,000 people in size. It has become commonplace to speak of the rural/urban divide, but the reality is that small towns have a wide range of different characteristics, problems and opportunities. As a basis for more detailed research on policies from housing to services to economic development, it is important to understand the makeup of the different types of towns in rural England.

The research uses a wide range of social and economic indicators to classify England's rural towns into meaningful categories. Population size alone is not enough: a large town close to a big city may have fewer services than its size suggests, while some small places – particularly if their economy is based on tourism or recreation – may have considerably more.

The research also establishes that nearly a quarter of England's population live in small rural towns, and between 2001 and 2006 that population grew by 5.3 per cent – over twice as fast

as the rate of growth of larger towns and cities. For further details see: <http://www.rerc.ac.uk/TypologyFinal.pdf>

- **EEDA Rural Proofing Guidance (East of England Development Agency)**

To promote the use of rural proofing, EEDA has published a short guide to rural proofing in economic development to make it easier for organisations to assess their approach to rural needs at three levels: organisational infrastructure, strategic priority setting and individual interventions. It has also developed a step by step evaluation tool for rural proofing of individual projects. This can be downloaded at <http://www.eeda.org.uk/rural-proofing.asp>

- **Government response to Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee report on Securing Food Supplies up to 2050**

The Government has accepted the main thrust of the EFRA Committee's conclusions and recommendations on food supply. The full response can be read at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmenvfru/1022/1022.pdf>

- **State of Rural Services 2010 (Rural Services Network)**

The Rural Services Network plans to publish a State of Rural Services (working title) report in 2010, which sets out the recent evidence on trends in public service provision in rural England. The report will combine statistics and research with the real-world knowledge and experience of RSN members. This will be the first report of its kind. The focus will be on provision of local public services, whether delivered directly by that sector or commissioned by it e.g. from voluntary organisations. However, the backdrop will inevitably include prospects for the rural economy and for public sector funding. Details of the emerging format for this document can be found at: <http://www.rsonline.org.uk/images/files/srs2010evidencebase.doc>

- **Global Broadband Quality Study Shows Progress, Highlights Broadband Quality Gap (Said Business School, University of Oxford & Universidad de Oviedo)**

The results of the second annual global study on the quality of broadband connections released today reveal that 62 out of the 66 countries analysed had improved the quality of consumer broadband services since last year. However, new data from the study highlights the extent of the digital quality divide between urban and rural areas and, for the first time, compares the quality of fixed and mobile broadband services. The United Kingdom was 26th of the 66 countries surveyed for quality of broadband provision. Further details can be found at <http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/newsandevents/Documents/BQS%202009%20final.doc>

- **The Future is Rural Too (The Rural Coalition)**

A countryside coalition is calling for a new vision for England's rural communities. The call is being made by six national organisations representing the social, economic and environmental needs of rural areas. The coalition is campaigning for reforms that will create a strong, confident and sustainable countryside.

Members of The Rural Coalition are: Action with Communities in Rural England, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Country Land and Business Association, Local Government Association, Royal Town Planning Institute, Town and Country Planning Association. The coalition is chaired by Matthew Taylor MP, author of last year's report to government on rural housing and employment.

<http://www.rsonline.org.uk/politics/coalition-demands-new-rural-vision.html>

- **Disintegrated Rural Development? Neo-endogenous Rural Development, Planning and Place-Shaping in Diffused Power Contexts – Mark Shucksmith, Newcastle University (Sociologica Ruralis)**

This article asks whether the concept, integrated rural development, still has any meaning in the context of the new rural governance and begins to link this to re-theorisations of concepts of spatial planning, place-shaping, capacity-building and neo-endogenous development, and offers illustrations from the north of Scotland. The article concludes by suggesting that initiatives such as the EU's LEADER programme might be recast explicitly as a transnational experiment in doing 'disintegrated rural development', addressing the challenges of neo-endogenous rural development, multi-scalar governance, an enabling, generative state and the transformation of mainstream policies.

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122599768/abstract>

- **Rural Shops Alliance is looking for new recruits**

The Rural Shops Alliance is actively looking for individuals, including current and ex-retailers, who might be interested in offering face to face information and guidance to other interested retailers. In-house and on-the-job training will be available. If you know of anyone that you think might be both interested and suitable, please e-mail Richard Lee, RSA Counties Co-ordinator at richard.rsa@klee.fsnet.co.uk

The RSA is a national trade association working to support the owners of independent rural shops. The RSA represent over 7,000 such businesses in England. Their objectives are:

- To act as the national voice for rural retailers
- To campaign on their behalf
- To help them to become more competitive, to the benefit of the communities that they serve

<http://www.rural-shops-alliance.co.uk/>

Regional

- **East Midlands Tourism Awards (East Midlands Tourism)**

On 8 October 2009, the East Midlands Tourism awards were presented. Winners (gold award winners) from Leicestershire were:

Access for All – Imago, Loughborough University

Small Hotel – Kilworth House, North Kilworth

Small Visitor Attraction – Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, Sutton Cheney

Other tourism attractions and businesses in Leicestershire that received awards were:

Access for All – Foxton Locks, nr Market Harborough (bronze)

Large Hotel – Imago, Loughborough University (silver)

Large Visitor Attraction – Conkers, nr Ashby de la Zouch (bronze)

Pub Experience – The Hunting Lodge, Barrow Upon Soar (silver)

Sustainable Tourism – Horseshoe Cottage Farm, Cropston (silver)

Sustainable Tourism – Imago, Loughborough University (bronze)

Taste of the Region – The Grey Lady, Newtown Linford (bronze)

Tourism Experience – Launde Abbey, East Norton (bronze)

<http://www.eastmidlandstourism.co.uk/article.asp?PageId=110&ArticleId=178>

- **East Midlands Rural Action Plan Review Consultation Update (EMRAF)**

The consultation stage has now finished. Two targeted consultation events and other contributions have demonstrated that EMRAF is looking at a substantial review. A proposed RAP will be launched at the EMRAF Forum meeting on 11 November at the Council Chamber, Rutland County Council. Members of EMRAF will be given the opportunity to comment on the proposed plan and a further month will be given for final responses. The final version of the new RAP will be launched in January. Please e-mail Angie Essom aessom@rcan.org.uk with any enquiries relating to the Rural Action Plan Review Consultation.

- **East Midlands Regional Evidence Base 'The East Midlands in 2009' (emda)**

An updated Evidence Base 'The East Midlands in 2009' has been developed by the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) to support the Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

The Evidence Base presents a statistical portrait of the East Midlands that identifies key challenges and issues that the RES must address in order to create and sustain a flourishing region.

Emda is keen to test this Evidence Base with stakeholders and is therefore publishing *The East Midlands in 2009* as a consultation draft. In particular they wish to identify gaps, errors and omissions that can be addressed as this body of work is developed for final publication early in 2010. The deadline for consultation responses is 4 November. Further information is available at <http://www.intelligenceeastmidlands.org.uk/content/view/1359/>

- **Secondary centres of economic activity in the East Midlands (University of Lincoln for emda)**

Secondary centres are defined for the purposes of this study as urban settlements that are smaller than a Principal Urban Area, but still significant as a centre of economic activity. The secondary centres considered include a range of settlements, from large industrial towns to small market towns. This research has been undertaken by the Enterprise Research and Development Unit of the University of Lincoln for emda. A summary of the findings of this research has been incorporated within the consultation draft of the East Midlands Regional Evidence Base *The East Midlands in 2009* (Chapter 10) – as referred to above. For full details of the project background, approach, key findings and conclusions together with a recent presentation on the research please see:

http://www.intelligenceeastmidlands.org.uk/component/option,com_research/task,showReport/A/hidemainmenu,1/id,2238/lead,11/Itemid,29/s,odate/o,ASC

Leicestershire

- **INSPIRE Leicestershire (Leicestershire Rural Partnership)**

The INSPIRE Leicestershire programme has been approved by emda.

Specific elements of the programme include: Town and Centres Business Partnership Development, Business Growth and Sustainable Communities, and Infrastructure Investment Grants. Overall management of the programme will be undertaken by Leicestershire County Council's Rural Team under the auspices and review of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership. The programme will be undertaken via close partnership working with Business Link,

Leicestershire Promotions, the County Council's Better Places Team, District/Borough Economic Development officers and other business/sector representatives.

- **Leicestershire Together Website**

The Leicestershire Together website has been updated to make it more user friendly. The updated website can be viewed at <http://www.leicestershiretogether.org/>

Events

- **Country Parks Events (Leicestershire County Council)**

The Country Parks section of Leicestershire County Council is running a variety of events in the next couple of months. Booking is advisable or essential for some events. Contact 0116 3056918 or e-mail countryparks@leics.gov.uk

Adventure, Nature and Family Fun

Halloween Event Beacon Hill, 31 October; Winter Wader and Wildfowl Walk, Watermead, 15 November; Bush Craft/Survival Crafts, Lount Nature Reserve in North West Leicestershire, 19 December; Hawk Walk, Bosworth Battlefield, 3 January.

Countryside Crafts

Straw Bee Skep Workshop, Bosworth Park, 22 November; Holly Wreaths various dates and venues; Woodland Management (Coppicing), Saltersford Valley Picnic Area, 10 January.

Volunteering Conservation Days

Pond Management, Watermead, 5 November; Sycamore Removal, Jubilee Wood nr Loughborough, 8 November; Woodland Management, Watermead, 3 December; Layering and Transplanting Hazel, Sheet Hedges Wood nr Groby, 13 December; Reedbed Management, Watermead, 7 January.

- **Leicestershire Together Conference: 7–11 December 2009**

The annual Leicestershire Together conference is changing. In previous years, a single venue has been hired for a single day and a series of workshops, events, stalls and presentations have been run for a delegation list often approaching 200. However, this year, the Leicestershire Together Strategic Board have decided to cut costs and instead there will be a series of events from 7–11 December.

An eclectic programme of events is being arranged. Some events will be hosted at County Hall but events will span both the geography of the county and the work of the Partnership. If you have any queries about this year's annual event, please e-mail either donna.mackay@leics.gov.uk or danny.myers@leics.gov.uk

Funding

- **BT Community Connections**

BT Community Connections is an award scheme which enables community and charitable organisations to get online and make use of information and communications technology (ICT).

Organisations, working in any field of community benefit can apply for a laptop and a year's free broadband connection. There are more than 1,000 award packages available to groups

who can demonstrate how an award will benefit their work and the local community. See <http://www.btcommunityconnections.com/> for further details.

- **Abbey Charitable Trust**

The Abbey Charitable Trust was established in 1990 and to date has donated over £25 million to charities in the UK.

The Abbey Charitable Trust is committed to supporting local communities and disadvantaged people, particularly in those areas where Abbey, Alliance & Leicester or Bradford & Bingley have a significant presence. Projects are funded based on the following three priorities: education and training, financial advice, community regeneration.

Next issue of the Digest will be out in **December 2009**.....best wishes until then.

If, in the meantime, you notice anything worth sharing please let me know.

Philip Bailey (philip.bailey@leics.gov.uk, 0116 305 5403) www.oakleaves.org.uk.

Interested in keeping up to date on issues affecting rural Leicestershire?

Please register with the Leicestershire Rural Partnership to receive updates at www.oakleaves.org.uk/register.html