

RURAL NEWS DIGEST #4

February 2009

Hello and welcome to the latest Leicestershire Rural Partnership Rural News Digest.

National

- **The potential of England's rural economy (EFRA Committee)**

Following the publication of the EFRA Committee's report on the potential of England's rural economy the Government's response is due to be published on 21st January 2009 at 11am as HC 155. The response will be available at

www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/environment_food_and_rural_affairs.cfm

- **Rural Economies Recession Intelligence (Commission for Rural Communities)**

In Issue 3 we reported that the CRC have been asked by Hilary Benn to provide him with regular briefings on how the economic downturn is affecting rural communities. Just before Christmas the CRC published their 2nd report. Further information can be found at

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/projects/creditcrunch/overview#tellus

Future reports will focus on different themed areas. These will include

- Business performance and recession challenges (deadline passed)
- Rural labour markets, unemployment and benefit claimants (3rd February)
- Rural housing issues (2nd March)

The CRC are keen to hear your experiences of the economic downturn against each of these. Deadlines for each theme are provided above. Please send information to Juliet Johnson at the CRC (Juliet.Johnson@ruralcommunities.gov.uk, 01242 534044). I would be most grateful if you could copy me in on any correspondence.

Leicestershire County Council has similarly been reporting on impacts more locally. The latest briefing can be found at www.lsr-online.org/reports/credit_crunch_report_december_2008.

- **Migrant workers (Business in the Community, The Prince's Rural Action Programme)**

This paper sets out the assessment of Business in the Community's Migrant Worker Integration Group on the challenges and opportunities posed by the migrant labour force in rural areas. It sets out:

- the scale of rural migration in the UK;
- the formation of the Migrant Worker Integration Group;
- the Voluntary Code of Practice on Employing Migrant Workers / Overseas Staff in Great Britain;
- why migrant workers, both permanent and seasonal, are so important to business in rural areas;
- measures by which to assist the integration of migrant workers into the community, dealing with challenges such as housing and community cohesion; and,
- examples of good practice where business have worked with migrant workers to deliver lasting benefit.

The full document can be found at <http://www.bitc.org.uk/document.rm?id=8450>

- **Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007 (Commission for Rural Communities)**

The CRC have been publishing a number of State of the Countryside 2008 updates based on new information. One key update has been on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007. Their full report can be found at

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/stateofthecountrysideupdate5ruralanalysisoftheindexofmultipledeprivation2007

- **Putting the economy back on track (Federation of Small Businesses)**

The FSB has launched a series of five reports with positive proposals for putting the UK economy back on track. The reports are based on the results of the FSB biennial membership survey. The recent financial turmoil has flagged up the pivotal role that small businesses play in the wider economy. They make up 58 per cent of the private sector workforce and are the primary job creators. It is the work, innovation and sustained growth of the small business sector that will help the UK economy through this period. Five key policy reports will be rolled out in the following areas:

- Business support and finance
www.fsb.org.uk/policy/assets/business%20support%20and%20finance.pdf
- Transport, environment and ICT
www.fsb.org.uk/policy/assets/transport%20environment%20and%20ict.pdf
- Skills and training
www.fsb.org.uk/policy/assets/skills%20and%20training.pdf
- Crimes against business
www.fsb.org.uk/policy/assets/crimes%20against%20business.pdf
- Work-life balance
www.fsb.org.uk/policy/assets/work-life%20balance.pdf

More details can be found at www.fsb.org.uk/default.aspx?id=667&loc=policy

- **Oxford Farming Conference 2009**

All papers from this year's Oxford Farming Conference, held in early January, have been uploaded. Speakers included Hilary Benn, Martin Taylor (Long Clawson Dairy, Leicestershire), and Jean-Luc Demarty (Director General of DG Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission). Papers can be found at

www.ofc.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=26

- **Fresh Ideas – Rural Social Enterprise (Plunkett Foundation)**

Fresh Ideas, the second in a series of publications from the Plunkett Foundation and Social Enterprise Magazine, was launched by Kevin Brennan MP, Minister for the Third Sector, at the conference via video message. Fresh Ideas includes articles on the Plunkett Foundation's global vision, rural health and social enterprise, community-owned shops and multipurpose centres alongside features on the Plunkett Foundation's work in the North West and with local food community enterprises. The full document can be found at

www.plunkett.co.uk/templates/asset-relay.cfm?frmAssetFileID=460

- **Farming Link (Defra)**

The January issue of Defra's Farming Link includes an update on CAP Reform and an interview with Sir Don Curry on the future of farming and food. All can be found at

www.defra.gov.uk/farm/contact/link/pdf/fl-January09.pdf

- **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform and Healthcheck (EC, Defra)**

There have been some recent developments in relation to reform of the CAP. EU agriculture ministers reached a political agreement on the Health Check of the Common Agricultural Policy. The Health Check will modernise, simplify and streamline the CAP and remove restrictions on farmers, thus helping them to respond better to signals from the market and to face new challenges. The Reform will include the phasing out of milk quotas, the decoupling of support, and the abolition of set-aside.

Further information is also available from Defra's website at www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/capreform/index.htm or on the EC Agriculture and Rural Development Commission's website at ec.europa.eu/agriculture/healthcheck/index_en.htm

(Also see Oxford Farming Conference for presentation from Jean-Luc Demarty on "EU agricultural policy and trade: what next?").

- **UK Broadband speeds 2008 (Ofcom)**

Ofcom have published a report on Broadband. A key finding is that, "overall dissatisfaction with broadband is higher among rural users (12%) than among urban users (7%). This may be because they tend to receive slower speeds; rural consumers on 'up to' 8Mbit/s packages received average speeds 13% lower than their urban counterparts". The full report can be found at www.ofcom.org.uk/research/telecoms/reports/bbspeed_jan09/bbspeed_jan09.pdf

- **Models of Effective and Innovative Service Delivery to Older People in Rural Areas (Cabinet Office, Social Exclusion Task Force)**

The Social Exclusion Task Force (SETF) in the Cabinet Office and Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra) are working in partnership on a short study on older people in rural areas. Given that ageing will be one of the major forces shaping rural areas, SETF and Defra are keen to ensure that older people living in these communities enjoy optimal well-being as they age. This project will feed into the wider Government refresh of Opportunity Age to be published in spring 2009. The Call for Evidence seeks evidence of good practice and innovation related to:

- Social Inclusion and participation
- Improving health and well-being
- Supporting older people to live independently
- The provision of transport

The deadline is 30th January 2009. More information and Call for Evidence questions are available at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/short_studies/call_for_evidence.aspx

Leicestershire

- **Rural Economy Scoping Report (Leicestershire County Council)**

The County Council commissioned Ecotec to undertake a scoping study which will help us prioritise future rural sector support. With the forthcoming closure of our Rural Business Support Programme we need to consider future opportunities in relation to new sub-regional economic delivery arrangements (EDC, SNR, MAA etc.). We thank all those who contributed to this study. The final report and executive summary is now available at www.oakleaves.org.uk/research.html.

- **Leicestershire Together Conference (Leicestershire Together)**

The Leicestershire Together Conference was held at Holywell Park, Loughborough on 5th December 2009. All presentations, including one on access to services can be found at www.leicestershiretogether.org/index/meetings_and_events/leicestershire_together_conference_2008.htm

- **MAA launch and Government signoff**

At the Leicestershire Together the Multi-Area Agreement (MAA), covering both Leicester and Leicestershire was formally launched. On the 12 January 2009 the Government signed it off at 10 Downing Street. A summary of the MAA is available at www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1119496.pdf
The full MAA will shortly be available at www.leicestershiretogether.org/index/local_area_agreements/the_multi_area_agreement.htm

Events

- **Leicestershire Rural Partnership's Bi-annual Conference 2009**

Another reminder about the LRP's Bi-annual Conference which will be held on 19th June 2009 again at Hothorpe Hall, near Theddingworth. At last year's we launched our Leicestershire Rural Strategy and welcomed Lord Haskins as our key note speaker. For next year we are working to the theme of Sustainable Rural Communities. More information will follow in due course.

- **Rural Action Annual Seminar 2009 (Rural Community Council)**

This year's Rural Action Annual Seminar will be held on 12th March 2009 at Leicestershire County Council, County Hall, Glenfield. Adenda will include topical items that are of interest to all rural Community groups especially Parish Councils, Parish Plan Groups and Village Hall Committees. For more information please contact Diana Cook (dcook@ruralcc.org.uk, 0116 268 9706).

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

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

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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