



# EECAS NEWSLETTER

East of England Civic & Amenity Societies

Issue: February 2011

Website: <http://www.cambridgeppf.org/eecs/>

## Message From The Chairman

The East of England Civic Societies Committee has agreed that it should become a less formal regional cluster and rather a 'Forum' of active civic and amenity groups. A name change to include Amenity groups was agreed so that EECS will now become EECAS or the 'East of England Civic and Amenity Societies'. EECAS will create an e-network for member societies to sign-up to and encourage new EECAS members. The new 'Forum' will hold a self-funding meeting in 2011 with a key speaker - though EECAS might continue to hold joint specialist events or seminars with the RSA. It was suggested that the 2011 Forum should be on the subject of the Government's Localism agenda, held in the late spring at Peterborough or Ely.

The New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership will cover Norfolk and Suffolk, but the Greater Cambridge & Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) will extend into Norfolk, up to King's Lynn, as well as to Rutland. Our region also has the Kent, Greater Essex & East Sussex Local Enterprise Partnership. The LEPs are to replace EEDA, but they are not being offered any government funding. The region's Historic Environment Forum and East of England Environment Forum have both expressed concern that they will be purely business-oriented, and that there is a need to convince them that a good environment helps businesses by its contribution to 'quality of life' and therefore helps them to recruit and retain staff. Organisations that have made representations to the Secretary of State along these lines get the reply that it up to the Local Enterprise Partnerships, not to him, how they operate.

While the new Government's move towards localism is to be welcomed, there are dangers that we must all work to avoid:

- Civic Voice has urged that there is a great opportunity for civic societies to play a greater role, but very few neighbourhoods have active societies.
- The question of apathy needs seriously to be addressed. Probably apathy is the wrong word: in today's family, where both parents work, those who really need to be heard simply do not have the time to engage.
- The idea of a community forum fills me with alarm. It will very likely be driven by vocal minorities and the majority will stay silent. I think there is no substitute for a properly-elected council, whose members feel under some constraint to behave properly for fear that otherwise they will not be re-elected.
- The modern world is too complicated for most things to be decided purely locally without regard for the wider geographical area and its infrastructure.
- At least as important is that one cannot expect a small local area to have the expertise needed to reach the right decision on many issues.
- But localism offers great opportunities and it is up to us all to make sure it works well.

Societies in the region need to share knowledge and expertise on what works well. Two projects in the region are worth mentioning, in which civic societies are cooperating with other organisations:

- *Changing Chelmsford*, <http://www.changingchelmsford.org/>, a collaborative process to develop a strategic vision for this historic market and industrial town
- *2030 Vision for the Greater Cambridge sub-region*, <http://cambridgeppf.org/vision/>, examining what it is hoped the sub-region around Cambridge will be like in 20 years from now and what needs to be done now to achieve it.

Cover-East (Community and Voluntary Forum: Eastern Region) has revamped its very useful political updates web page <http://www.cover-east.org/Political-Updates.asp>. It also has a web page <http://www.cover-east.org/Shaping-Policy.asp> listing current national consultations.

The Heritage Lottery Funding is preparing a consultation on its future strategy, due to run from the end of January through to the end of April 2011. Meanwhile, it has announced an overall budget of £250m for new grants next financial year (March 2011-12) – £45m more than the budget for the current year. Grants require elements of learning/participation or conservation.

In early 2011 English Heritage will be launching the Heritage List for England - a fully searchable database of all nationally designated assets, from buildings to battlefields. This will be the first time that such information has been made available online and it will be accessible via the English Heritage [website](#). English Heritage is trying to reduce its administration costs and is closing its London Office, though as a result the regional office in Cambridge is expanding. There is a concern that local authorities could be cutting back on Conservation Officers and delegating many activities to less accountable 'Trusts'.

Please feel free to email me about issues that concern you.

**Peter Landshoff:** [pvl@damtp.cam.ac.uk](mailto:pvl@damtp.cam.ac.uk)

Chairman, East of England Civic & Amenity Societies

Note that a Map showing the geographical coverage of the various Local Enterprise Partnerships can be found at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/local/localenterprisepartnerships/>

## **Mixed Reaction to the Government's Localism Bill**

On 13th December, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, published the Government's "Localism Bill". There have been a variety of views expressed on the issue and a plethora of analysis and comment.

Below can be found links to information and opinion on this important piece of legislation.

The Localism Bill has been published at: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism.html> with 'The *Plain English guide to the Localism Bill*' available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishguide>.

**The National Association of Local Councils** said it gave "another boost to grassroots democracy and community action" and has prepared two publications – '*What is Localism?*' and '*Localism in Practice*', which are available from their website at: [http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Publications/Booklets\\_and\\_Resources.aspx](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Publications/Booklets_and_Resources.aspx)

**Civic Voice** says it 'warmly welcomes the fundamental intention behind the Localism Bill to deliver a "power shift" to local communities' and has produced a briefing for MPs:

[http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Second\\_Reading\\_Commons\\_briefing -  
January\\_2011.pdf](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Second_Reading_Commons_briefing_-_January_2011.pdf)

The **Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)** said that the Bill "raises more questions than answers in crucial areas of planning reform" and has produced reports and briefings available at:

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/3741&ap=1>

**Friends of the Earth's** planning campaigner Anna Watson said that: "This is the third major shake-up of planning in a decade and the Government still hasn't got it right - this Bill must be radically amended to boost localism and make planning a key part of a greener Britain." Their full assessment can be found at:

[http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press\\_releases/localism\\_bill\\_13122010.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press_releases/localism_bill_13122010.html)

In the event this Bill becomes law it will be essential for societies or trusts to keep up-to-date with developments happening in their area to ensure they are at the forefront locally. The new laws will present both an opportunity and a challenging agenda for local civic groups.

## **Government Plans Planning Bonfire**

Planning Minister Greg Clark recently announced a review of planning policy which he has said will be "a radical overhaul of planning policy cutting out thousands of unnecessary central instructions and putting communities at the heart of decision making". It is designed to consolidate policy statements, circulars and guidance documents into a single consolidated National Planning Policy Framework. The Government has said that the new Framework is intended to be:

- localist in its approach, handing power back to local communities to decide what is right for them
- used as a mechanism for delivering Government objectives only where it is relevant, proportionate and effective to do so and
- user-friendly and accessible, providing clear policies on making robust local and neighbourhood plans and development management decisions

The Government wants planning professionals, local authorities, community groups and members of the public to have an opportunity to shape the new Framework and has invited organisations and individuals to offer their views and suggestions to the Department by **28 February 2011**, to:

[planningframework@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:planningframework@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

or

Alan Scott, National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government, Zone 1/H6, Eland House, London SW1E 5DU

Further details can be found here:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1804403>

## **Government Consultation on Forest Sell-off announced.**

The **Forestry Commission** is holding a consultation about the future ownership and management of the public forest estate in England – land managed by the Forestry Commission on behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. **The Consultation will run for 12 weeks starting from 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011.**

It sets out the Government's rationale for a move away from the Government owning and managing significant areas of woodlands in England and the principles which will guide the Government in deciding on the way forward. The consultation is proposing a mixed model approach to the ownership and management of the public forest estate "to create a greater role for civil society, businesses and individuals".

The full details of the Consultation can be found at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-8D3G4M>

There has been much criticism and concern at the proposals, with the Woodland Trust running a campaign and petition against the sell-off under the title '**Save England's Ancient Forests**'. This can be found at: <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/Pages/default.aspx>



The **Guardian newspaper** has put together an interactive map showing where all the Forestry Commission land is located so you can check whether any is in your society's area: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/interactive/2011/jan/27/forestry-commission-interactive?intcmp=239>

## **EECAS Spring Seminar Planned**

We are planning to hold a Seminar in the eastern region in the late spring, with assistance from Civic Voice, to cover the issues of the Localism Bill, new Planning Framework, Local Enterprise Partnerships and protecting the Community Public House. Any suggestions or offers of help should be sent to the e-Newsletter editor, details below.

### **E-newsletter Editor:**

Nigel Bell – Telephone: (01223) 243830 x 205

(I usually work Tuesday and Wednesday – if unavailable, please leave a message)

E-mail: [planning@cambridgeppf.org](mailto:planning@cambridgeppf.org)

**Please e-mail or call me with news and articles from your area, the deadline for the next E-newsletter is 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011.**