

Rural Report

A monthly newsletter focusing on issues of rural life and farming of relevance to the work of the Church of England in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Information is drawn from organisations connected with the countryside (in its widest sense) within Suffolk and beyond.

The newsletter will produce brief reports giving factual information on a range of issues. Items may be of general interest or provide opportunity for prayer.

If more details are needed on any of the topics mentioned, please contact Brian Chester at bc@bcnewslink.com or call 01572 757600

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“Well-planned tree-planting projects are an important component of global efforts to improve ecological and human well-being. But tree planting becomes problematic when it is promoted as a simple, silver bullet solution and overshadows other actions that have greater potential for addressing the drivers of specific environmental problems, such as taking bold and rapid steps to reduce deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions.” *Science Magazine*

Farmers and growers are being encouraged to take part in Open Farm Sunday online (June 7) and post their own mini videos on social media. For more information visit: <https://www.nfuonline.com/back-british-farming/campaign-news/open-farm-sunday-goes-online/>

North Norfolk has been listed among the top 20 areas with a high risk of job loss as a result of the pandemic with a reduction of 10,436 jobs equating to 31 per cent of the work force. Suffolk was not listed. Alan Lockety, head of the RSA Future Work Centre, said: “No part of the country is likely to be spared a severe recession, but those most dependent on hospitality and tourism will be particularly badly hit, especially rural areas.” In contrast, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation reported an 8.7 per cent increase in job postings in May in South Norfolk and Breckland.

“The delights of the British countryside are an undoubted pleasure – possibly more so at the moment than at any other time. But over the last month or so, as lockdown has continued and the good weather persisted, many of our clients have reported an unprecedented number of people accessing their land, both on and off registered footpaths.” Estate agents Savills which is advising landowners to use signs to remind walkers of social distancing and of temporary routes to avoid passing through gardens or close to rural homeowners. *Eastern Daily Press*

Dairy farmers have been among the hardest hit by the lockdown as the loss of foodservice markets reduced demand for milk. The NFU’s Countryside has produced a list of questions and answers to explain the challenges and suggest how consumers can help.

<https://www.countrysideonline.co.uk/food-and-farming/feeding-the-nation/dairy/british-dairy-and-coronavirus-your-questions-answered/>

The Arthur Rank Centre has launched a resources hub – *Together Apart: A church response to coronavirus* - in support of rural churches and communities. Visit: <https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/together-apart/>

The NFU is continuing to press for a Trade, Food and Farming Standards Commission a body which would review policy and develop solutions to promote free trade while holding all food imports to the UK’s high food standards. The call comes after the Agriculture Bill was passed into the House of Lords unamended, despite calls for agroecology (the study of ecological processes applied to agricultural production) to be incorporated and widespread support for changes that would ensure food imports in any future trade deals meet the same high production standards as are legally required in the UK.

With no significant amount of rain in the short-term forecast, arable farmers, especially on light land, are increasingly concerned about the progress of crops. A wet autumn delayed drilling of many wheat and barley crops after which slow germination hindered root development making plants vulnerable to drought. Livestock farmers are suffering from lack of grass for cattle and sheep.

The June edition of Seeds of Prayer has significant farming content. Contact: info@villagehope.org.uk

Farmers have been warned to remain vigilant to the heightened threat of fraudulent scams during the coronavirus pandemic. The advice follows reports of suspicious websites being set up to advertise the sale of farm vehicles and machinery which do not exist, as cybercriminals increasingly target small and medium-sized businesses, including farms. *Farmers Guardian*

This newsletter was initiated under the guidance of the Diocesan Rural Affairs Group set up as a means of identifying current rural issues and considering how the church should respond.

