

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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Farmers and landowners should not wait for the government to fund nature conservation ambitions – and consumers must be prepared to change in order to help producers reverse East Anglia's wildlife 'crisis'. That was the message from the WildEast movement after sparking debates on how its ambitious 50-year goal of returning 250,000 hectares of land to nature could be achieved. The project aims to become Britain's first regional nature recovery project, asking everyone from farming estates to churchyards and backyard gardeners to pledge 20% of their landscape to nature. *East Anglian Daily Times*

Suffolk Constabulary is warning pet owners to take extra care to protect dogs. Sergeant Brian Calver said: "Organised crime groups are actively targeting addresses, with working breeds tending to be those favoured by criminals. Anybody with any information regarding the theft of dogs or other pets is encouraged to contact Suffolk police on:

<http://www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us/existing-report-update>

A new guide to British fruit and vegetables has been launched on the NFU's website Countryside Online. The interactive tool celebrates the 3.5 million tonnes of fruit and vegetables grown each year in the UK, provides a month by month guide to what's in season, plus 'Meet the grower' case studies and suggested recipes.

<https://www.countrysideonline.co.uk/back-british-farming/cook-and-eat/seasonal-guide-to-british-fruit-veg/>

Results of a survey by the Royal Forestry Society of experiences of woodland creation reveal support for woodland creation is tempered by concerns over availability of suitable land, loss of land value resulting from change of use to woodland, the accessibility of long term grants to support capital investment and maintenance – and excessive red tape.

The Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee has warned that with many sub-postmasters struggling and thinking of leaving their post offices, the proposed removal of £50 million in subsidies could 'tip many over the edge'.

A species of parasitic wasp discovered by chance could provide farmers with a chemical-free way of controlling a major pest in oil seed rape and other crops according to researchers at the John Innes Centre, Norwich. The wasp, an obscure species called *Microctonus brassicae*, first reported in 2008, lays its eggs within the body of the cabbage stem flea beetle - with fatal results.

East Anglia's farming leaders have welcomed a government pledge to create a trade and agriculture commission as a 'major step forward' in a campaign to protect the industry from cheap, low-quality food imports. The National Farmers' Union has been lobbying for an independent commission to review trade policy and ensure all imports are held to the same food quality, animal welfare and environmental standards expected of British farmers. The campaign resulted in more than a million people signing an online petition to protect UK food standards. *East Anglian Daily Times*

The organisation Caring for God's Acre is looking for wildlife sightings in churchyards as part of its 'Year of the Burial Ground'. The contact is Andrea on andrea@cfga.org.uk

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/our-work/year-of-the-burial-ground/>

We have seen farm shops setting up stalls outside NHS hospitals to make life easier for key workers who have been putting their lives on the line to help others. Those at most risk from Covid-19 have been receiving doorstep deliveries of meat boxes and fresh fruit and vegetables from their local farm shop and food stores. In a time of adversity, it has been the local food and farming sector that has risen to the challenge and been the lifeblood of many rural communities.

CLA regional director Cath Crowther

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.

