

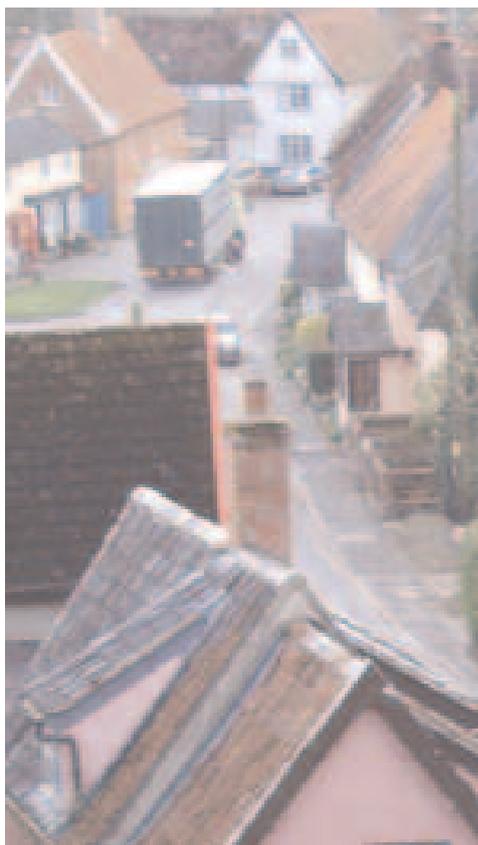
# Rural Report

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](mailto:bc@bcnewslink.com) or call 01572 757600



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■ **The heavily 'leaked'** government plan to remodel UK farming in the most significant change of policy in generations, was officially announced on the last day of November. Current systems of support will be phased out over the next seven years and used to fund projects under an Environmental Land Management Scheme. Reaction has been mixed.

Mark Bridgeman, president of the Country Land and Business Association which represents 30,000 rural businesses, said: *"From January, we will embark upon the biggest shift in agricultural policy in 70 years. The new Environmental Land Management scheme has the potential to be a genuinely world-leading policy that will allow land managers and government to work together to reverse biodiversity decline and mitigate climate change, as well as deliver quality food, grown and reared to the highest standards.*

*"But the transition from the old system to the new is fraught with risk. Many farmers will find it hard to see past the drastic cuts to the Basic Payment Scheme, that begin next year. The average family farm will see cuts of over 50% before the new schemes are fully available in 2024. The Government has announced the Sustainable Farming Incentive to help bridge the gap, but with only a month to go before the transition phase begins we have no details whatsoever about how this will work on the ground and the level of investment it will provide."*

■ **As uncertainty continues** around the nature of the UK's departure from the EU, farm organisations are offering detailed briefings to producers on potential implications. The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board has issued guidance for the beef, lamb and pork sectors; the National Farmers Union has set up an online EU Exit channel and an EU Exit Hub.

■ **Defra** has reported that 26 per cent of farm income last year came from diversified enterprises – representing a total of £740m. This figure may well rise because of the pandemic, which has brought both challenges and opportunities.

■ **More than** 150 producers have already joined an interactive Pledge Map recently set up by the NFU to recognise the work farmers across the country are doing to make their farms net zero by 2040.

Visit: [https://www.nfonline.com/news/latest-news/were-in-for-net-zero/?utm\\_source=b251120&utm\\_medium=bulletin&utm\\_campaign=email](https://www.nfonline.com/news/latest-news/were-in-for-net-zero/?utm_source=b251120&utm_medium=bulletin&utm_campaign=email)

■ **Farms around** Hadleigh and Stonham Aspal are part of RSPB project to 'save the turtle dove'. East Anglia is reported to be one of the few remaining strongholds for the bird which has been in serious decline. The conservation project covers both Suffolk and Norfolk. The RSPB says that the UK population of this migratory dove has declined by 93 per cent since the 1970s.

■ **Homelessness** in rural areas in England has more than doubled in the last two years, according to analysis published by the Rural Services Network. The number of households categorised as homeless in rural local authorities in England rose to 19,975 – an increase of 115 percent from 2017-18. The report states that rural councils fear the housing shortage in the countryside could soon worsen.

■ **A national avian influenza** zone has been imposed following six reported outbreaks (November 30) of the virus in different locations. The introduction of a prevention zone follows a decision to raise the risk level for avian flu arriving here through wild birds from medium to high. Keepers of poultry and other domestic birds are required to introduce enhanced biosecurity measures. Avian flu is a notifiable disease which must be reported to Defra.

■ **Suffolk Police** have issued a warning about slippery rural roads. A combination of mud, damp conditions and overcast skies has resulted in surfaces being as slippery as ice.

■ **Food fact:** The UK is far from being self-sufficient in pig meat. In 2019 almost 60 per cent was imported – most of it from the EU.

*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.*