

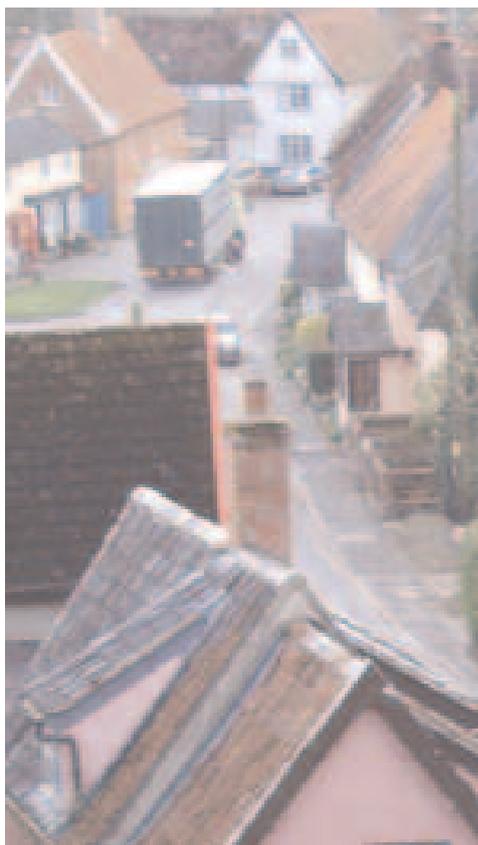
Rural Report

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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■ **RABI's online wellbeing** and counselling platform has seen an increasing number of calls seeking support and a return rate of 65 per cent, as farming people access the resource multiple times. "The use of this new online service over the first year confirms how vital early, preventative and confidential support is to our community," says Kathleen Chapman, RABI's interim director of services. "The availability of the bespoke online and text-based service, in addition to the articles and forums provided by Qwell, provides farming people with the access to support whenever they are ready." A quarter of those using the site regularly are aged 56 and over; farming women account for over 60 per cent of visitors to the site. The five issues most commonly discussed with counsellors have been: family relationships, anxiety and stress, suicidal thoughts, self-worth and loneliness. *Farm Business*

■ **New figures** from the Health and Safety Executive show agriculture's continued poor performance in combatting workplace injuries and fatalities with 34 fatalities during the past year against an annual average of 28 over the last five years. HSE's report, shows that 30% of deaths over the same five-year period resulted from being struck by a moving vehicle. Other fatalities resulted from contact with animals (16%), falls from height (13%), being struck by moving object (13%), and trapped by something collapsing/overturning (10%). Farming's fatal injury rate - 8.47 per 100,000 workers - is around 20 times the all-industry rate, the HSE said. *Farming UK*

■ **'A country faces a housing crisis when a significant part of the population doesn't have access to a safe, decent home that's suitable for their needs and that they can genuinely afford to live in.'** In Britain, analysis by Shelter has shown that 17.5 million people are in this situation – or up to 22 million when children are included. The charity says it is "More than a crisis, this is a national emergency." For more visit <https://www.cpre.org.uk/explainer/why-is-there-a-housing-crisis-and-what-to-do/>

■ **The NFU is encouraging farmers** to take to social media to show how they produce 'climate friendly food for the nation'. British farmers produce food to some of the highest standards in the world and are committed to reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, says the NFU as it urges farmers to speak out.

■ **The government's** new green payment scheme earned a lukewarm response from East Anglian farmers - while conservationists criticised its 'shocking lack of ambition' for helping wildlife. Farmers will be paid for providing environmental benefits, such as improving grasslands and soils in place of 'direct payments' based on acreage. But the payment rates were reported as 'prompting disappointment from farmers', who questioned whether they reflected the cost of providing these 'public goods'.

East Anglian Daily Times

■ **The Department of Transport** reports that 89 people lost their lives on rural roads last year - up by almost 50% from 60 fatalities in 2019. Overall, including car drivers, horse riders, and pedestrians two-thirds more people – just over 3,100 – were killed using roads in the countryside than in cities. This was despite a marked drop in the amount of traffic during the pandemic restrictions. NFU Mutual is launching a campaign designed to improve the safety of those using rural roads.

■ **NFU Sugar** has warned the extension of a tariff-free quota for sugar cane imports could lead to a permanent decline in the UK industry. The government has been accused of ignoring the impact on growers as it announced it will extend a 260,000 tonne tariff-free quota on raw cane sugar imports for another three years. NFU Sugar Board chairman Michael Sly warned the decision, alongside the liberalisation of sugar in the UK-Australia trade deal, could lead to the permanent decline of the UK beet sector - a major crop in East Anglia.

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.