

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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■ **Open Farm Sunday** is back 'on the farm' on 27th June. Organisers LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) are putting a strong focus on hosting small, socially distanced farm walks and talks to provide an insight to what happens on the farm.

■ **Suffolk's police** and crime commissioner Tim Passmore has been elected chair of the National Rural Crime Network. Mr Passmore has been the county's commissioner since 2012.

■ **Nearly 70,000** members of the public have backed the NFU's call for immediate action to tackle rural crime. As newly elected police and crime commissioners take up their posts, more than 50,000 people have signed an open letter demanding action to tackle fly-tipping, including working more closely with local authorities and landowners on prevention, clean-up and prosecution.

■ **Regenerative agriculture** is a practice likely to attract increasing attention. It's key elements are: no or minimal soil disturbance to help soil life flourish; growing ground cover crops to lock in nutrients and protect the land and using a rotation of three or more crops to avoid nutrient over extraction.

■ **There has been** a 129 per cent increase in developments planned on green-field land, putting them at risk of 'rapid and reckless' projects, according to the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). In its *Beauty Still Betrayed* report, CPRE warns that the developments are at the cost of affordable housing and could price people living in rural communities out of their areas. They are calling for the government to publish all details of planning applications for development on areas of outstanding natural beauty, and to prioritise building projects for social housing or affordable homes.

■ **A report** from the British Free Range Egg Producers Association has highlighted how farms can make environmental gains, and where the bulk of carbon emissions are generated. Chairman James Baxter says he hopes the findings will help start positive conversations involving the whole supply chain about what can be done to help farmers continue to play their part in producing food sustainably.

■ **A plan** to reintroduce Britain's largest bird of prey, the White-tailed Eagle (also known as the Sea Eagle) in Norfolk is concerning outdoor pig farmers. The National Pig Association's senior policy adviser Charlie Dewhurst said: "We are disappointed that Natural England has given the project the green light without addressing the concerns of NPA members. East Anglia is home to a significant proportion of the UK's outdoor pig herd and farmers are rightly worried by the potential impact of introducing these large apex predators."

■ **Fed-up farmers** are preparing to stage protests over government plans to sign tariff-free trade deals with Australia and other countries, which they fear could lead to a flood of cheap food imports. World leaders who are intent on signing free-trade deals for agri-foods with the UK have been told to expect a frosty reception when they attend a G7 summit - from 11-13 June - in Carbis Bay, Cornwall. Farm lobby group Save British Farming (SBF) is canvassing support for a protest at the event to demonstrate the anger from the farming industry. SBF founder and farmer's wife Liz Webster said the group was contacting local farmers about organising the protest. "We have the fight of our lives to save our British values." *Farmers Weekly*

■ *"It is incredibly disappointing to hear news of the government's trade strategy from sources other than the government themselves, especially when its reported plans will have such a massive impact on British farming. It is also incredibly concerning that the government is in a 'sprint' to sign up to a trade deal with Australia that would have serious implications for British farming while seemingly offering incredibly little benefit to the economy."* NFU president Minette Batters

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.