

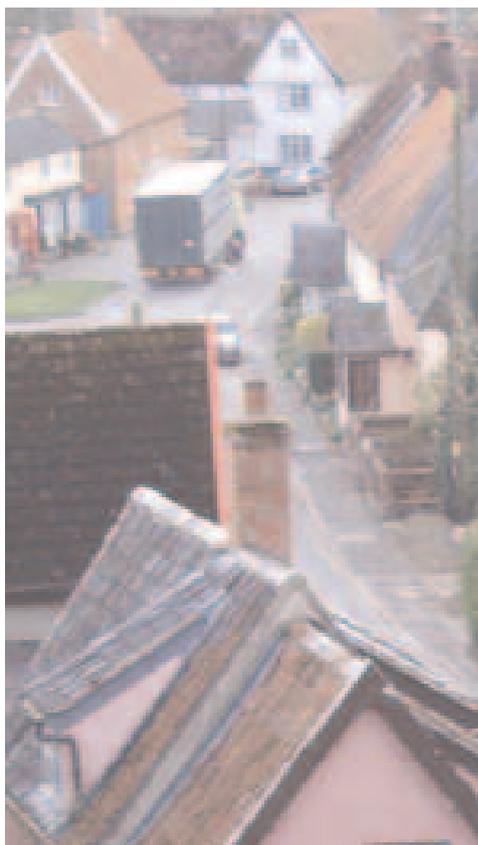
Rural Report

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



Issue 91: October 2020

■ **Social care staff** in rural areas are facing significant barriers to accessing COVID-19 testing, including lengthy journeys to centres and lack of availability of tests, according to a study by the Rural Services Network. Journeys of at least half an hour by car to the nearest COVID-19 testing facility were reported, with nearly a quarter having to travel up to an hour. Only 15% reported having access in under half-an-hour.

■ **Vertical farms** with their soil-free, computer-controlled environments may sound like sci-fi. But there is a growing environmental and economic case for them, according to new research by the John Innes Centre (Norwich), the University of Bristol and the aeroponic technology provider LettUs Grow. The study identifies future research areas needed to accelerate the sustainable growth of vertical farming using aeroponic systems.

(*Agricultural Biotechnology Council*).

<https://www.foodandfarmingfutures.co.uk/Library/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ZWVhNzBIY2QzZWJjNi00YWZiLWWEIMTAzNWExOTFmMijjOWU1&rID=MjQwNjQ=&slID=MQ==&bckToL=VHJIzQ==&qcf=&ph=VHJIzQ==>

■ **The House of Lords** has voted in favour of an NFU-backed amendment to the Agriculture Bill which would strengthen the role of the Trade and Agriculture Commission. The amendment passed with a 107 vote majority, showing the strength of feeling following a concerted period of lobbying says the NFU. If the amendment goes on to be approved by MPs in the House of Commons in October, the Bill will give the Commission the power to provide Parliament with independent advice about the impact every future trade deal will have on British food and farming standards.

■ **Conservationists** and farmers in East Anglia fear possible 'downgrades' to the government's flagship environmental payments scheme could be 'catastrophic for nature'. WildEast, formed earlier this year with the ambition of returning 20pc of East Anglia's land to nature, has claimed that the demands of Brexit and the financial cost of Covid-19 could force changes to the new Environmental Land Management Scheme, due to be introduced in 2024 to replace the EU's system of land-based subsidies. *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **Farming Community Network**, You Are Not Alone, the Wellbeing Portal and Suffolk County Council have worked together to offer suicide prevention training on October 14 and 29. The sessions are aimed at the farming community and associated businesses including vets, land agents, agronomists, NFU members and staff. Places are limited to 30. For more information go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/suffolk-farming-map-suicide-prevention-training-tickets-118615057831>

■ **Next year's Suffolk Show** has been cancelled. Organisers decided that the coronavirus pandemic makes it impossible to hold the event 'safely and with confidence'. The Suffolk Agricultural Association said it had taken the difficult decision 'with regret'.

■ **Love British Food** has worked with organisers of the Greatest Online Agricultural Show to stage a virtual harvest service tomorrow (**Saturday 3 October**). The event will be streamed live from 1pm, led by the Bishop of Ripon, Helen-Ann Hartley. The two-hour service will include a message from the Duchess of Cornwall, a Bible reading from Martin Clunes and a poem read by Damian Lewis.

For more visit: <https://www.lovebritishfood.co.uk/british-food-fortnight-2020>

■ **British Sugar** is predicting a 15pc drop in sugar beet yields for the upcoming harvest after extreme weather and diseases put a dent in a decade of crop improvements.

■ **To access** a new blog by the Lightwave rural chaplain Graham Miles go to: <https://lightwaveruralchaplain.wordpress.com/>

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.