

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, contact brianrobertchester@gmail.com or call 01572 757600



Issue 140: November 2024

Two of Suffolk's farm shops have been named among the best in Britain for the freshest local produce. The Milk Shed at Fen Farm Dairy, Bungay and Alder Carr Farm, Needham Market are on a country-wide list published by *The Times*.

Data obtained through a Freedom of Information request has revealed a total of 10,586 fly-tipping incidents have been reported in Suffolk since 2022 with almost £38,000 being paid out in fixed penalty notices and prosecution costs. *East Anglian Daily Times*

Biochar, a carbon-rich product produced when organic materials are heated in an oxygen limited environment, has the potential to improve soil health, sequester carbon and support the transition towards more sustainable agricultural practice, according the UK Agri-Tech Centre. Biochar's capacity to enhance productivity while helping meet climate change goals makes it a valuable tool for the future of farming, say researchers.

Plans for two free-range poultry houses that would house almost 40,000 birds have been submitted to Mid Suffolk District Council by Copperfield Enterprises Ltd for its 200 hectare estate at Kenton Hall, Debenham. *East Anglian Daily Times*

'We have found that, overall, food standards remained stable in 2023, despite the rising cost-of-living and inflation which continued to impact grocery bills for consumers. Food businesses also continued to grapple with labour shortages and increased supply chain costs.'

Professor Susan Jebb, chair of the Food Standards Agency

A study by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board has revealed a significant increase in consumer trust toward British agriculture, marking the highest levels seen in six years. Conducted in August 2024 and surveying over 2,000 UK adults, the research shows that 67% of consumers have a positive outlook on British agriculture, exceeding the previous peak of 66% in 2020. *Farmers Weekly*

Comment by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust following a report by the RSPB on birdcrime

'The GWCT condemns the illegal killing of all birds of prey and so the RSPB's report, which records 1,344 incidents of the illegal killing of raptors in 15 years, makes depressing reading. Sadly, the criminal acts of a minority bring gamekeepers into disrepute. By doing so, they cloud the positive conservation work done by game managers across the country – including their work to help raptors.'

An independent review of 200 RSPCA Assured farms has found that the scheme is 'operating effectively' to assure animal welfare. The review followed a protest by more than 60 animal rights organisations which called for the scheme to be scrapped after alleged animal mistreatments on Assured farms recorded by 'undercover agents'. The RSPCA also reports that a modernisation plan, already underway, will include a 'significant increase' in the number of unannounced visits to its 4000 farms. Body worn cameras may also be used to aid assessment of welfare issues.

RABI has launched a Winter Wellbeing fundraising appeal aimed at supporting farmers and their families during the challenging winter months. Money raised will help to 'ensure that those farming people most in need during the colder months can receive vital support'.

<https://rabi.org.uk/rabi-launches-joint-winter-wellbeing-appeal/>

'It is blindingly obvious that the evidence on which we rely is insufficient. It doesn't adequately answer the questions we need answering; we still don't share it freely enough, learn enough from it or integrate it well enough into what we do. There isn't enough of it and we often don't make the best use of what little there is.'

Nigel Doar, The Wildlife Trusts

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.