

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



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■ **Restriction areas** for bluetongue - a virus that affects cattle and sheep - identified in Norfolk and Suffolk in August, had spread to Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, all Greater London, Surrey and West Sussex by the end of September. Cases of the virus had also been identified in Devon, north east Somerset and north west Wales. Farmers are hoping for a cold snap that could hit midges that carry the virus.

■ **People's Trust** for Endangered Species has launched a *Healthy Hedgerows* app, aimed at farmers and land managers that want to make - or adjust - their hedgerow management plans to grow the healthiest of hedges. Read more: <https://nlaf.us15.listmanage.com/track/click?u=eb10e2cb536aa8474452095af&id=ea5597d365&e=6f1cfe49b5>

■ **The National Grid** has been given the go-ahead to erect power-carrying pylons covering 29km between the villages of Bramford (Suffolk) and Twinstead (Essex). The plan, opposed by Suffolk Council Council, also includes 11km of underground cable.

■ **The RSPCA** is to review its long-established quality assurance scheme. More than 60 animal rights organisations, as well as celebrities such as Bryan Adams, Ricky Gervais and Joanna Lumley, have called for the scheme to be scrapped. The RSPCA vice-president Sir Brian May has also resigned. The protest comes after alleged animal mistreatments on RSPCA Assured Farms recorded in recent months by 'undercover agents'.

■ **A Suffolk farmer** has joined forces with colleagues across the country to call for an end to 'farmwashing'. Jimmy Doherty, owner of Jimmy's Farm in Wherstead, outside Ipswich, is among the campaigners who have written to the 'big-six' supermarkets calling for more support for local producers. The *Farmers against Farmwashing* campaign claims major supermarkets are using fake farm brands and overuse of Union Jack branding to give shoppers the impression that their products come from 'quaint British family farms'. Farmer and TV presenter Jimmy Doherty said: "We're seeing generations of family farms swallowed up, replaced by faceless corporations that are driven by profit rather than people or the planet. It's time we take a stand and support real British farming before it's too late." *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **Viticulture** is one of Britain's fastest-growing agricultural sectors. In 2023 the largest yet grape harvest is expected to yield 20-22 million bottles of wine. Over the last 10-15 years there has been a significant increase in vineyard area in the UK. With the sector ripe for further expansion, what does this mean for rural communities? Jessica Sellick (2024)

<https://nlaf.us15.listmanage.com/track/click?u=eb10e2cb536aa8474452095af&id=62076f66cc&e=6f1cfe49b5>

■ **A report by the Rural Coalition** has claimed the rural economy has 'enormous potential which could generate billions of pounds in additional tax revenues'. The report says that with the right policy framework, the rural economy could increase productivity, leading to an additional £9 billion to £19 billion a year in tax revenues. This growth would support rural communities and have far-reaching benefits for the national economy.

<https://rsnonline.org.uk/rural-economy-a-sleeping-giant-worth-19-billion>

■ **A survey has revealed** that while there is awareness of the importance of taking a break off the farm, too few farmers actually do so. FarmingUK (2024).

■ **Family-owned** farm machinery manufacturers Claydon Yield-o-Meter Ltd, based at Wickhambrook, Newmarket, has been shortlisted for a British Chamber of Commerce Global Britain Award. Since 2013 the company has seen exports rise from 30 per cent to 60 per cent of turnover. The firm was founded in 1981 by Jeff Claydon. It makes direct drills, straw harrows, rotary cultivators and inter-row hoes at its Suffolk factory.

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.