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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■**Plans to restore** a long-lost river close to Bungay are gaining momentum. The River Waveney Trust unveiled plans last year to revive stretches of the Tin River, which runs north towards Bungay from the village of Ilketshall St John. The river – thought to be named because parts have been lined with corrugated iron sheets – has largely vanished from the maps, and in some areas its course is hard to identify. Key regulatory permissions have now been granted clearing the way for upstream restoration. *East Anglian Daily Times*

■**Turkey farmers** supplying the RSPCA Assured scheme will face stricter welfare requirements under updated standards aimed at strengthening bird welfare across housing, transport, encouraging natural behaviour and disease management. *FarmingUK (2026)*

■**The UK cost of rural crime** fell by six per cent last year according to NFU Mutual's latest report revealing an estimated total of £41.5m in 2025, down from £44.1m the previous year. However, agricultural vehicle theft claims rose by 18 per cent to an estimated £8.3m in 2025; with the cost of quad bike and all-terrain vehicles theft increasing by 31 per cent to an estimated £3.5m. The estimated cost of livestock theft also increased by nearly 30 per cent to £4.5m last year. Farm animals worth an estimated £1.95m were severely injured or killed in dog attacks last year showing an increase of ten per cent against 2024.

■**An award-winning farm shop** Fen Farm Dairy will be expanding into Darsham, near Yoxford, this summer. Run by Jonny and Dulcie Crickmore, the new farm shop will join their other locations in Bungay, in Flixton Road, and a second shop in Eye, at the Roy Humphrey Business Park.

■**The government** has boosted measures to protect East Anglia's pig farms from an outbreak of African swine fever. The disease has been circulating in parts of Asia and Africa, leading to the deaths of millions of pigs worldwide and causing significant disruption to the meat trade. The recent spread into parts of Europe has sparked concerns among pig farmers in Norfolk and Suffolk - a vital area for national pig production, with around a quarter of the UK's pig herd kept in the East of England. *East Anglian Daily Times*

■**A Farmers Weekly survey** of beef farmers has revealed that despite disease (41 per cent) and cost issues (40 per cent), with investment a close third (38 per cent), 50 per cent of respondents had grown their herd over the past five years – up from 33 per cent in 2024. Further growth was planned within the next two years by 42 per cent of respondents while 45 per cent said their businesses would stay the same.

■**Farmers can reduce** fertiliser usage without impacting yields, while also cutting their carbon footprint by up to 25.8 per cent, according to a new trial of controlled release fertilisers. And the certified carbon reductions could even result in a premium price for their crop. *Farming Online (2026)*

■**Managing a farm** in the UK comes with no shortage of challenges. Rising input costs, tighter margins and increasing regulatory pressure mean that every penny counts. One area that often flies under the radar is agricultural waste disposal, and for many farmers, it is quietly draining money that could stay in the business. The good news is that with the right machinery, farm waste does not have to be a cost at all. It can become a source of income. *Farmers Guide (2026)*

■**Ruby Gardiner** from Claydon who works at Suffolk Farmhouse Cheeses, Creeting St Mary and Bea Wallis, Wickham Market, (British Sugar) gained awards in the annual Suffolk Farm Apprentice of the Year competition. Pig farmer Molly-Anne Gimson, of Starvegut Hall Farm, Kenny Hill, Newmarket, was awarded the Rising Star Scholarship. Presentations were made at the Suffolk Show by show president Christopher Clarke.

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.