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 161: September 2026

■**There was a** 13 per cent year-on-year rise in farmland for sale in the East of England in the first half of this year, according to land agents Savills - higher than any other region. Many purchasers were established farmers buying neighbouring land, according to William Hargreaves, who leads Savills' rural team in Suffolk.

■**Several walking routes** have been reopened on Dunwich Heath closed by the severe wildfire that covered 150 hectares. Paths within the immediate affected area will remain closed. to allow safety work to continue.

■**Jon Lacey**, chief fire officer for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, has praised the role of farmers and contractors in tackling the Dunwich wildfire. Their aid helped crews access difficult areas, create additional fire breaks, remove potential fuel sources and tackle hotspots. "This was an exceptionally challenging incident in a unique and environmentally sensitive location, and I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to everyone who supported our response," he said. "In particular, the local farming community, contractors, landowners and residents demonstrated tremendous teamwork and community spirit throughout the operation." *East Anglian Daily Times*

■**Work is underway** at Harper Adams University (Shropshire) to develop crops which can withstand the stress of droughts. The aim to provide crop production that will enhance the country's food security.

■**Farming organisations** have warned that, without immediate action, next year's food production and the future of the next generation of farmers, are at risk. NFU president Tom Bradshaw said: "Defra's strategic commitments last week were a welcome and important step towards building greater water and long-term resilience on farms. But farmers face an immediate crisis in cash flow and confidence.

"Rain has come too late for lost harvests and slashed yields, while livestock farmers are dealing with the worst bluetongue outbreak to reach our shores," he said. "Many are worried they will not have money in the bank to plant next year's crops or replace livestock lost to bluetongue."

■**RABI is committing** £2 million in direct financial support to farming households affected by prolonged dry conditions across England and Wales. The RABI Emergency Drought Grant will be launched on September 7. It will provide £2,000 grants towards personal and household living costs.

■**Tougher action** is planned against fly-tippers under new government measures aimed at tackling waste crime. Stronger police involvement, better intelligence sharing and seizing the vehicles and assets they rely on are envisaged. The move follows long-term campaigning by the NFU and CLA.

■**Suffolk Punch Trust,** created with the aim of preserving and promoting these former 'working horses' has suspended its Friends scheme. An email to the Friends members said: "It is clear that elements of our Friends programme are no longer viable. We no longer have the staff numbers to be able to maintain communication via newsletters or other channels and as a result, we cannot continue to expect regular payments from our friends without being able to meet our obligations." *East Anglian Daily Times*

■**Colman's Mustard** is 'on the market' ahead of a merger between British owner Unilever and American food giant McCormick. Colman's has been part of Norfolk life since 1814, when Jeremiah Colman began milling flour and crushing mustard seed at a watermill in Stoke Holy Cross, near Norwich. The famous bull's head logo, symbolising its fiery strength and its ideal pairing with British beef, followed in 1855, and the brand won Royal Warrant from Queen Victoria in 1866. Production moved to a factory at Carrow Road, Norwich in 1858, where it stayed for 160 years until the site closed in 2020. At its peak, the company's employment list totalled *2,300.*
Eastern Daily Press

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.