

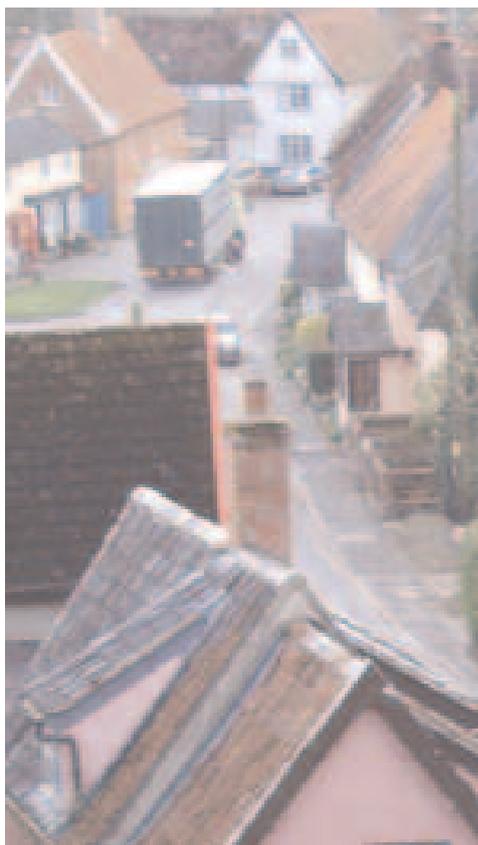
# Rural Report

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](mailto:bc@bcnewslink.com) or call 01379 669157



## Issue 56: September 2017

■ **A crop** of spring barley was grown and harvested without the help of human hands in an experiment run by Harper Adams University and a company called Precision Decisions. Drones and autonomous vehicles did the work.

■ **Police are** warning that theft of lead from buildings is again being reported in Suffolk. Among a list of recommendations are: regular checks for missing lead; installing security lighting/CCTV/alarms; restricting vehicle access; improving visibility by cutting back vegetation; asking neighbours to keep watch; reporting suspicious activity on 101 and 999 if a crime is in progress.

■ **Second homes** are on the increase, says a report from the think tank the Resolution Foundation. Between 2000-02 and 2012-15 the number of people with more than one property rose by 30 per cent and now totals 5.2 million.

■ **The cost** of rural theft has risen by 20 per cent in the first half of 2017 according to claims recorded in the NFU Mutual's 2017 Rural Crime Report. Nationally the cost of claims falls by four per cent last year while the East of England was one of three regions which recorded increased losses.

■ **A report** (*Uncertain Harvest*) by the Campaign to Protect Rural England uses official statistics from the UK and Europe to show that smaller farms in England are in steep decline. Overall, a fifth of English farms have disappeared in the past 10 years, but the rate is fastest amongst the smallest. Almost a third of farms under 50 hectares disappeared between 2005 and 2015. CPRE believes that a mix of farm sizes and enterprises is crucial to maintaining England's world-renowned landscapes and diversity of food.

■ *"I have grave concerns over the implications for British food production. Under the scenarios they advocate, British farming would be severely damaged as cheaper imports are allowed in while British exports remain subject to high tariffs abroad. These arguments involve a very narrow economic analysis that fails to acknowledge the benefits farming delivers to the public outside the limited confines of food prices in shops. The British public needs a viable and productive farming sector to continue to maintain and enhance the countryside they value and to provide a safe and trusted, as well as affordable, supply of British food."* NFU president Meurig Raymond responding to a prediction that the country would gain a £135bn benefit from a 'hard Brexit'.

■ *"The Common Agricultural Policy has, at great expense, reduced agricultural productivity by lessening competition and supporting inefficient farmers, and increased costs for consumers. Outside the EU, the UK will be free to abolish tariffs on food products, which will unlock new trade deals, help developing countries and deliver cheaper food for consumers. We can also reform the agricultural subsidies regime so that we reward farmers who deliver public goods like biodiversity and flood prevention, rather than rewarding wealthy landowners."* The think tank Policy Exchange <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/farming-tomorrow/>

■ **CCTV is** to be made mandatory in all English slaughterhouses. British Veterinary Association president Gudrun Ravetz said: "We have been campaigning on this issue for a number of years. It will provide an essential tool in fostering a culture of compassion that could help safeguard animal welfare."

■ **Reported incidents** of pollution from livestock farms in Suffolk and Essex have fallen from a peak of 38 in 2010 to just four last year. Nine of the incidents in the six-year period were described as serious.

■ **Butter and cream** prices have achieved their highest values since AHDB Dairy records began in July 2000. This was despite August traditionally being a quiet month for wholesale trade. The average UK butter wholesale price rose by 13 per cent in August to £6,150/t, 89 per cent higher than the same month last year and 232 per cent higher than when prices began their upward trajectory in March 2016.

*Farmers Weekly*

*This newsletter is prepared under the guidance of the Diocesan Rural Affairs Group set up as a means of identifying emerging rural issues and considering how the church should respond.*