

# 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

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AW Mortier (Farms) Ltd, Alderton, Woodbridge and Home Farm (Nacton) Ltd, Ipswich were joint winners of an annual conservation award made by Suffolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). Both farms run successful vegetable production operations. Winners of the Peewit Trophy for balancing agriculture with environmental responsibility were Bridge and Ivy Farms, Wickham Market.

A major project to examine the sustainability of rural communities is being financed by the Prince's Countryside Fund. *Recharging Rural* will make recommendations for rural communities in sparsely populated areas. A report is expected in July.

The National Trust, RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts claim that five times the level of current investment in the farmed environment is needed if the UK is to meet commitments to protect the natural heritage post-Brexit. "We're now at a critical moment where the UK Government will decide how to redeploy the £3bn currently spent through the EU Common Agricultural Policy each year as we leave the EU. It's crucial that farmers, conservationists and other land managers have the certainty to start planning ahead for a greener UK," says a report.

'Watch your oil' warns Suffolk Police. More than 50 cases of heating oil theft were reported in 2017. Improve security by checking, locking, fencing and fitting intruder lighting.

More motorists are charged with drink-driving in rural areas than urban suggests a study based on a Freedom of Information request sent by the Press Association to police forces up and down the country. Lack of rural public transport could be a factor.

A survey by *Farmers Weekly* has shown that few farmers would vote differently if there was another EU referendum. The numbers were: some 53% to leave, 45% opted remain with 2% not voting. Greatest support for leaving the European Union seems to come from the 'traditionally non-supported' sectors of British agriculture such as sugar beet, poultry, pigs and horticulture. In contrast, the non-farmers taking part (likely to include many people working in the ancillary services and wider food industry), voted 57% to remain and 36% to leave, with 6% not voting.

The NFU's latest farmer confidence survey has shown a rise in expectations for the next year but a significant fall thereafter - the first negative score since the survey began eight years ago.

Farming will come to St Edmundsbury Cathedral on 7th January with a celebration of Plough Sunday at Evensong at 3.30pm.

Major investment in 'meatless meat' is being reported in America. Meat packaging company Cargill sold off its cattle feedlots to put cash into Memphis Meats, a company which aims to produce meat from animal cells. Richard Branson and Bill Gates have also invested. Beyond Meat, formed a year ago, is already selling meat-like burgers in high street grocery outlets.

"Urban bias is endemic. This can lead to farming and rural issues being ignored, over-simplified or viewed purely from a metro-centric angle. Healthy journalistic scepticism can cross the line into ideological bias against conventional, intensive or large-scale farming systems."

Nuffield Farming Scholarship report by Anna Jones on *How the mainstream media portrays farming to the public*.

<http://nuffieldinternational.org/live/Reports>

Hopes of closer co-operation between the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and farmers to tackle hare coursing followed an NFU seminar attended by 31 Forces and the CPS. The eastern region is particularly affected with Cambridgeshire one of the worst counties. Incidents rose by almost 40% last year – rising from 1,184 in 2016 to 1,634 in 2017.

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.

