

# 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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■ **A bird** that spends most of its life on the wing is seeking more nesting sites. The number of Swifts making a summer visit to this country is in decline with a reduction in places to make their nests said to be the cause. All Saints Church at Worlington saw an opportunity to help and installed more than 40 nest boxes in the tower. The success of the project will be told at a meeting at the church on Thursday 29th June at 7.30pm. Dean Frances is the speaker with representatives of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Action for Swifts and Save Our Suffolk Swifts taking part.

■ **At least** ten farms in Suffolk are on the list for Open Farm Sunday – 11th June. Nationwide, 300 farms are taking part with no less than 60 having pigs to view. Since the first Open Sunday in 2006, more than 1500 farms have welcomed 1.8 million visitors. The event is managed by Leaf – Linking Environment And Farming. <https://farmsunday.org/visit-a-farm/search?farmName=&location=Suffolk&region=>

■ **Dairy farmers** supplying the processor Arla suffered a milk price cut in May adding to producers' woes. Expressing its disappointment, the NFU questioned the validity of the cut with cream and butter prices rising and other sectors of the industry reporting strong growth.

■ **Young people**, especially young women, as a result of health concerns, are often drinking too little milk, which could damage the development of their bones and lead to conditions in later life including osteoporosis, or brittle bones, according to Ian Givens, professor of food chain nutrition at Reading University. He is among researchers who have concluded that a widespread belief among the public that dairy products in general can be bad for you, is a misconception.

■ **Urgent action** is needed to provide more affordable homes in the countryside, says the Rural Services Network. The network issued the warning in response to the *Housing: State of the Nation* report by MPs. RSN chief executive Graham Biggs said: "Housing is consistently rated as one of the top challenges facing rural communities across the country. A solution to the rural housing crisis must be found, and a meaningful increase in delivery of affordable housing in rural villages and small towns secured if we are to have a sustainable future for our rural communities." The report says the number of families living in temporary accommodation increased from 50,000 in 2011-12 to 72,000 in 2015-16.

<http://www.rsonline.org.uk/community/action-needed-now-on-rural-housing>

■ **A campaign** to encourage investment in the countryside has been launched by the CLA. The campaign aims to mobilise public support and highlight benefits delivered by a working countryside, from supplying affordable and nutritious food to maintaining habitats for wildlife. [www.cla.org.uk/influence/all-news/cla-launches-%E2%80%98-countryside-matters%E2%80%99-campaign](http://www.cla.org.uk/influence/all-news/cla-launches-%E2%80%98-countryside-matters%E2%80%99-campaign)

■ **Farmers** in Suffolk have been chosen for a farm trial which will compare the way wheat is grown and the yields produced on 50 sites across the country. Included are Brian Barker, Lodge Farm, Westhorpe who farms 513ha of arable crops and runs a LEAF demonstration farm and Edward Vipond of Troston Farms, Stanton, a farm manager responsible for 1,210ha of arable crops, including rye grown for Ryvita. Agronomist Laura Buckingham, who is working with Bocking Hall, Helmingham, Graham Thompson, of Crabbs Farm, Parham and James Forrest, Mowness Hall, Little Stonham will also be taking part. The trial is being run by the crop care company BASF. [www.eadt.co.uk/news/suffolk-and-norfolk-farmers-chosen-for-national-wheat-agronomy-trials-1-5026531](http://www.eadt.co.uk/news/suffolk-and-norfolk-farmers-chosen-for-national-wheat-agronomy-trials-1-5026531)

■ **New figures** from Defra show total income from farming (Tiff) in the UK fell by 7.5% to £3.61bn, after accounting for inflation. This is a sharp revision to the 1.5% drop from 2015 to 2016 reported a month ago, a mistake the government blamed on wrong data being used for vegetables, fruit and milk. The overall story remains the same with lower production and prices for cereals and dairy while potatoes, beef, sheepmeat and pork made bigger contributions. *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.*

