



Society NEWS



News and information for members of the **East of England Agricultural Society**



College Challenge winners
at the Winter Stock Festival

Kids Country

See what our Kids Country team has been up to and learn to build a big mansion at home!

Our Society funded scholar

A look into Vicky Robinson's Nuffield Scholarship journey

Help and health during isolation

How farming charities can help you during this difficult period

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East of England Agricultural Society

Welcome to the spring/summer 2020 edition of Society News

As I look out of my window on almost empty streets, it's important to spend time to reflect on the devastating impact that coronavirus is having on all our lives.

Along with the rest of the country, the showground is currently on full 'lockdown', with all events for the foreseeable future either cancelled or postponed. I have to congratulate our staff, who have been absolutely brilliant, helping event organisers re-plan events and rebook where appropriate, expertly juggling the calendar to make the best use of the available facilities for when the crisis is over. In line with government instruction all but essential staff are currently working from home, staying safe and looking after their families and loved ones.

For the first time since the war, we have recently witnessed empty shelves in our supermarkets, which brings into sharp focus the fragility of our supply chain and reinforces the argument for a strong, robust and sustainable UK farming industry.

As we all isolate at home spare a thought for our farmers and growers, after the wettest winter on record, major flooding and the disruption of Brexit, coronavirus is now proving to be the greatest health challenge in a generation. We applaud our food producers and the supply industry who have risen to the challenge magnificently and are working round the clock to keep our supermarkets supplied and the country fed.

'Lockdown' came at a very difficult time for the horticultural industry, just before Mothering Sunday and Easter with export orders cancelled and low demand from UK supermarkets grappling with panic buying. At the East of England Agricultural Society we recognise that the next challenge facing our farmers and growers is the availability of seasonal staff, to help we are creating a 'job board' on our website which we will promote through our social media channels – if anyone has any specific difficulties please contact info@eastofengland.org.uk to advertise their requirements.

On a positive note, at long last, the better weather has enabled spring cultivations to start in earnest and farmers to turn stock out, which must be a huge relief. Just getting through the next weeks and months will be a trial but has to be the priority.

What of the Society's future? We are pressing ahead, in conjunction, with our promoter partner to maximise the opportunity afforded by the Local Plan to co-ordinate and 'masterplan' sensitive development of new and affordable housing on the showground to help us fulfil our vision and secure a long term future of the Society.

Having consulted widely, a consensus is building around a role as an educator and facilitator in the rural economy, linking cutting edge technological advances in agriculture, environmental management, 'agritech' and food production with farmers and growers in the eastern region. We foresee a strong synergy with the emerging development of a University for Peterborough and are actively forging links with a potential agricultural faculty.

We already have a strong profile in primary education with our excellent Kids Country programme and connections to the developing world through our Marshal Papworth work. We now need to focus on developing links to secondary and further education. I'm delighted to announce that David Llewellyn, Vice-Chancellor of Harper Adams University has graciously agreed to be President of the Society for 2020/21 and to help us develop our educational offering.

The UK agricultural industry is undoubtedly in a period of dramatic change as we leave the EU, respond to coronavirus and the very real effects of climate change. As a Society, we are focused on supporting the regions agricultural, food and farming industries and the rural way of life through these very difficult and challenging times.

Richard Bramley

Chairman,
East of England Agricultural Society



DIARY DATES 2020

Please check our website as these dates are subject to change

AUGUST

19th-23rd - Equifest

SEPTEMBER

20th – Open Farm Sunday

26th – Gransden Show

NOVEMBER

10th – Agri-TechE REAP Conference

18th – East of England Farming Conference

19th – Peterborough Dinner

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or email us at membership@eastofengland.org.uk



kids Country

Breakfast Week

The Kids Country Team has had another busy season with the ever-popular Breakfast Week. Due to popular demand, we now deliver it twice a year to schools in November and January. Last season's Breakfast Week enabled Kids Country to educate over 850 children in a stimulating, practical and fun environment led by



Our fantastic team of volunteers at Welland Academy

enthusiastic volunteers. Children are the consumers of tomorrow, so it is our duty to teach them how to make sensible food choices and to realise how good quality food is integral to a healthy lifestyle.

Grow Your Own Potatoes



In early March, Kids Country held the Grow Your Own Potatoes planting event at the showground. Albert Bartlett and G's Fresh joined the team again this year and delivered an event which showed 400 local schoolchildren from farm to fork, where potatoes and mushrooms come from. The kids loved getting their hands dirty and are very patient having to wait to see if all their hard work will come to fruition. They have all taken their crop home to look after ready to return and harvest their crop when schools can once again return to normal.

STEM Partnership

NEW for February 2020, Primary Engineer and Construction Equipment Association (CEA) have partnered with Kids Country to offer a fully funded STEM course, a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This builds on a new technology focus we had at last year's Food & Farming Day; making generations of children aware of the diverse range of career opportunities in agriculture.

The programme provided teachers with the skills and materials to engage pupils in the cross-curricular application of mathematics, literacy



One of the teachers hard at work!

and design technology, through the design, construction and testing of a fully functioning vehicle.

On returning back to schools, teachers will be paired with a local engineer, who will help children to create an Agricultural Machine!

Next Step: There will be a celebration event here at the showground, on Tuesday 17th November 2020, where all school children will get the opportunity to test their machines alongside each other. Their vehicles will have a course and must travel forwards and backwards and climb a ramp. A winner will be announced at the end.

Thank you from Kids Country

A huge thank you must go to the Peterborough Dinner and Bedfordshire Dinner committee's and the many guests who contributed over £2,000 collectively, to fund busses enabling less fortunate schools to attend next year's Kids Country Food & Farming day.

If you would like to get involved with the Kids Country programme as a volunteer, exhibitor, sponsor or school, please contact slauridsen@eastofengland.org.uk

STOP PRESS

please see the newly created resources section on the Kids Country website, which the team has created in response to home schooling during coronavirus. There are lots of educational activities, works sheets, things to make and learn about – please share this news with friends and family who can utilise all this information. www.kids-country.co.uk



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Build your very own bug mansion at home!

We recognise that many of our members will currently be struggling trying to work out the logistics of home schooling their children, nieces, nephews or grandchildren. Why not try getting them engaged in building a bug mansion by upcycling materials you might have lying around the farm or garden?

An average garden accommodates **more than 2,000 different species of insect!** By providing the right habitats, we can greatly increase the number of 'beneficial' insects in the garden.

Where to build your bug mansion:

Some invertebrates like cool, damp conditions, while others prefer the sun. To cater for as many of them as possible, site the mansion where some

of it will catch the sun, but the rest will be in the shade under a tree or near a hedge, for example. Choose a level, even surface to build it on – the mansion may end up fairly heavy, so it will need a firm base.

Filling the gaps in your bug mansion:

Dead wood is essential for the larvae of wood-boring beetles and supports many fungi and crevices under the bark hold centipedes and woodlice.

Hollow stems, such as old bamboo canes, or holes drilled into blocks of wood, make good nesting sites for solitary bees.

Stones and tiles provide a frost-free place for amphibians to spend the winter

Straw and hay provide many opportunities for invertebrates to burrow in and find safe hibernation sites.

Dry leaves offer homes for a variety of invertebrates by mimicking the litter on the forest floor.

Loose bark makes a home for beetles, centipedes, spiders and woodlice.

Roll up a piece of **corrugated cardboard** and put it in a waterproof cylinder to create a home for lacewings.

Dry sticks are perfect for ladybirds to hibernate in.

Nectar-producing plants in and around your bug mansion can provide food for butterflies and bees.



How to build a bug hotel

You will need:

- Wooden pallets x4
- Bricks
- Plastic bottles
- Bamboo canes
- Straw
- Leaves
- Tiles
- Cardboard
- Stones/pebbles
- Twigs/loose bark

*Use old plastic bottles for this and always recycle when you can.

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

1 Place a wooden pallet in your chosen location. On top of the pallet, line bricks around the corners and across the middle.

2 Place your next pallet on top of this and repeat the process for all of your pallets.

3 Cut off the top two-thirds of your bottles. Fill up half of them with bamboo canes/plastic straws and the other half with rolled up cardboard. Place these inside the hotel.

4 Fill in the remaining spaces with bricks, leaves, pebbles, stones, tiles, loose bark and straw.

5 Add in any extra materials that you want to recycle e.g. old pipes, carpeting, toilet tubes, old plant pots. Be creative – add a welcome sign or give your hotel a name!

Thank you to the Wildlife Trust for their fantastic guide!



COMPETITION TIME!

Don't forget to send us pictures of the bug mansion you make, along with your name and age to slauridsen@eastofengland.org.uk by the end of June. We will send a bird feeder from Vine House Farm as a prize to the best creation as judged by the Kids Country team.

Peterborough Dinner

We had a fantastic evening in November last year, welcoming around 150 individuals to the Peterborough Dinner at the East of England Showground. It was great to see many Society members alongside local businesses working in agriculture, food and the allied industries.

We would like to thank Mr Richard Barnwell, Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire as guest speaker and Society President, the Bishop of Ely, Stephen Conway for his input to the evening's activities.

The Tony Whitsed award was presented by our Chairman, Richard Bramley to Paul Tate for his long- standing commitment to the East of England Agricultural Society, and his work in co-founding the Kids Country initiative.

Also, congratulations to all of the winners of the Long Service Awards in which two awards were presented during the evening to Jeffery Bradshaw for 40 years of service to HM & EA Frost and Gerald Simmons, for an impressive 53 years of working for F R Berridge & Son at Churchfield Farm, Oundle.



The Tony Whitsed Award winner, Paul Tate, co-founder of Kids Country



One of our Long Service Award winners, Gerald Simmons, receiving his award

We would also like to thank our attendees for donating over £600 towards transport costs for schoolchildren attending the next Kids Country Food & Farming Day.

Do you have an employee who has worked for you for over 25 years and you wish to nominate for a Long Service Award?

Please request an application form or further information by emailing membership@eastofengland.org.uk or call 01733 234451.

The 2020 Peterborough Dinner is on 19 November.



It's been a busy time for the Marshal Papworth Fund as we welcomed a new intake of Masters students. Kicking off with a welcome visit in Rutland, our new Masters students from across Africa and Asia joined the Gilman family at their 1,459ha mixed farm. They saw how environmental schemes have been incorporated into a successful arable and sheep farm, whilst discovering some of the business structure that has helped make their commercial enterprise a success.

The Marshal Papworth committee and Harper Adams University have made the decision to cancel this year's short course due to the Coronavirus threat. Whilst something we wanted to avoid where possible, it is clear to us that, even in a best-case scenario, it would not be possible to run the course and give the students the experience we would want them to have whilst in the UK.

However, we are already discussing with Harper Adams the possibility of having a larger Marshal Papworth cohort for 2021. We will review this once life returns to some semblance of normality and hope to continue our partnership with all our new partners in the future. Places will, of course, be held open for all students offered the scholarship this year and we will keep in communication with them.



Welcome visit to the Gilman family, Rutland

Bedfordshire Dinner

This year saw the return of 365 farmers to the Bedford Corn Exchange on 13 February. The evening was hosted by chairman Sam Franklin and the guest speaker was former Scottish rugby international and commentator, Ian Robertson.

The meal was sourced from local Bedfordshire suppliers including Woburn Country Foods, My Fresh and G&M Growers. Local beer was also available on the night, with ten barrels of Bedford's own, Charles Wells Eagle Bitter. The addition of the beer barrels proved to be extremely popular as had all been emptied by 10pm.

Attendees also donated £1,370 for Kids Country's Food & Farming day. This money will go toward transport costs to enable a Bedfordshire school to attend next year's event. We would like to say thank you to everyone who donated.

The Society would also like to give special thanks to the food and drink suppliers, the Bedford Corn Exchange for the venue, Chairman Sam Franklin, as well as the caterer Portfolio Events. We look forward to next year's dinner!

Support for Rural Businesses During Covid 19 - By Tom Arthey

I sit here to write this article from my hastily-rearranged home office, and like many, am still trying to get my head around what has happened to daily life in the past month.

For farmers, however, life goes on, and after what has to be the wettest autumn and winter in living memory, things have finally dried up enough to get some much-needed spring drilling done.

With farmers flat-out, and a barrage of news and information being delivered each day, Arthey Associates thought it would be helpful to summarise some of the key support measures that are relevant to rural businesses, especially those with diversification enterprises that are likely to take a significant hit as a result of the lockdown restrictions enforced by coronavirus.

Small Business Grant Fund / Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund

You may well have seen on the news that grants are available to small businesses and those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. This covers diversification schemes on farms. If you are eligible, your Local Authority will hopefully be in touch with you.

For small businesses in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rates Relief within the business rates system, will be eligible for a payment of £10,000 grant. Please note that this does not include agriculture property which is exempt from business rates, but could include property used for other diversification purposes (and already within the system as at 11th March 2020), such as livery yards, self-store storage units, caravan storage and possibly some microgeneration renewables schemes. Converted offices and industrial units will also qualify, but it will be ratepayer (usually the tenant-occupier) that can claim the grant.

Under the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant, eligible businesses with a rateable value of less than £15,000 will also be eligible for a grant of £10,000, or if the rateable value is more than £15,000 but less than £51,000, can receive a grant of £25,000. This includes qualifying rural diversification enterprises such as holiday lets, guest

house B&B's, riding schools, outdoor gyms, café and restaurants. On-farm venues that are used for weddings or events, car-boots etc. will only qualify if they are used for more than the 28-day rule, and therefore already qualify as a business property.

Charities which would otherwise meet these criteria, but whose bill for 11 March had been reduced to nil by a local discretionary award, are still be considered to be eligible for the RHL grant.

If you have an on-farm nursery, you may also be eligible for a grant if you are on Ofsted's Early Years Register and provide care and education for children up to five years old (early years foundation stage).

Business Interruption Loans

Where on-farm diversification projects have been set up, but are now facing financial hardship as a result of the lockdown measures, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) supports small and medium-sized businesses, with an annual turnover of up to £45 million, to access loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance of up to £5 million for up to six years.

The government will also make a Business Interruption Payment to cover the first 12 months of interest payments and any lender-levied fees. This means smaller businesses will benefit from no upfront costs and lower initial repayments.

The government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan, to give lenders further confidence in continuing to provide finance to small and medium-sized businesses.

The scheme is delivered through commercial lenders, backed by the government-owned British Business Bank, and there are 40 accredited lenders able to offer the scheme, including all the major banks. Please note, however, that these are loans, not grants, so are likely to be subject to repayment measures in the future.

Support Grants for the Self-Employed

A number of rural business owners are self-employed. The Self-employment Income Support Scheme will allow you to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of your trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 a month. It will be available for three months, but may be extended.

You are eligible if you submitted your Self-Assessment tax return for tax year 2018-2019, traded in the tax year 2019-2020, are trading when you apply (or would be except for coronavirus), intend to continue to trade in the tax year 2020-2021, and have lost trading profits due to coronavirus.

You will need to confirm to HMRC that your business has been adversely affected by coronavirus to ensure compliance. This is likely to be on a risk-based measure. Your trading profits must also be no more than £50,000, and more than half of your total income for either the tax year 2018-2019, or the average of the tax years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019.

If you're a self-employed farmer claiming farmers' averaging relief, HMRC will use the amount of profit before the impact of the averaging claims to work out if and how much grant you can claim.

HMRC aim to contact those eligible by mid-May 2020 and invite to claim using the online service.

Whilst the Local Authority or HMRC should be contacting you directly regarding the grant schemes, Arthey Associates are on hand to provide assistance, especially in establishing whether you qualify. We are also able to assist with putting together business loan applications for the Business Interruption Loan.

Finally, given the significant economic impact on the public purse, we would also like to point out that it is morally incumbent on us all to only claim grants when they are necessary to cover a genuine loss of income as a result of the lock-down measures.

Please contact Tom Arthey on 07748 295 448 or tom@artheyassociates.co.uk, or visit our website for details of the services we provide www.artheyassociates.co.uk



Join us for our biggest EoEFC

1797 was a busy year with the French invading Britain via Fishguard in Wales (they surrendered after two days), the Home Office investigating William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge as suspected spies, Horatio Nelson wounded at the Battle of Santa Cruz, the Spanish surrendering Trinidad and Tobago to the British navy, and London haberdasher John Hetherington wearing the first top hat in public before being fined £50 for causing public nuisance. The weather in the winter of 1796/'97 was notably stormy and was followed by a particularly wet summer.

Thankfully our forefathers had time to found a society for the promotion of agriculture and rural life in the East of England, and I am sure they would have been incredibly proud, and frankly amazed, at the jewel that is the East of England Farming Conference, being held this year on Wednesday 18 November at the showground.



With the 2019 conference cancelled owing to extreme weather and politics, the last event held in 2018 attracted nearly 250 farmers and associated professionals for a day of discussion, sharing the latest knowledge, and networking; in essence, ticking two key boxes at the heart of the Society's *raison d'être*, 'demonstrating excellence in the agriculture industry', and 'engaging with agricultural professionals'.

This year we're going a step further with more demonstrations, a focus on leadership and value, and we hope to welcome Minette Batters to kick things off before a roster of notable speakers on Wednesday 18th November; a date when we should have greater clarity on Brexit (you'd forgotten about that, hadn't you?!), and the future landscape following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The organising committee, along with key sponsors, invite you to join us. Tickets will be going on sale in the next

few weeks; do book yours with the generous Society discount. Also, this event is too good to keep to ourselves; would you please share details with friends, family, and colleagues? There will be notices in future editions of Society News and on social media.

Thank you, in advance, for your support. See you on Wednesday 18 November 2020.



Our Decision Maker session with Emily Norton (Savills), Neil Parish (EFRA), Patrick Holden (Sustainable Food Trust), Stuart Roberts (NFU) and Andrew Fearn (UEA).

Conference chairman, Tom Martin



SAVE THE DATE

EAST OF ENGLAND FARMING CONFERENCE

18 November 2020

East of England Showground
PETERBOROUGH
PE2 6XE





A roundup of Winter Stock Festival 2019

Last year's East of England Winter Stock Festival, Peterborough, which took place on 29-30 November, topped off a great year for the Agricultural Society. Cattle, sheep and pigs came from all parts of the country to compete in the Society's annual winter livestock event.

For the second year running, the supreme commercial cattle champion ticket went to Phil and Sharon Sellers from Lincolnshire, with their purebred Limousin heifer, Brockhurst Oriana. Reserve supreme champion went to local Bedfordshire exhibitor, Kevin Ludgate and his cross-bred champion, Tinkerbell.

The baby beef championship went to Ben Beckitt from Newark with his six-month-old Limousin cross steer, Frankel. Picking up the reserve was Oxfordshire exhibitor David Plested, with heifer, Red River.

Once again dominating in the sheep lines was Robert Garth and Sarah Priestley from North Yorkshire with their cross-bred and pure Beltex. They took both the supreme and reserve supreme titles with the lambs selling for £380/head to Kevin Ludgate on behalf of Clarence and Sons, London.

Over in the pig section, it was the turn of Newark exhibitor Chris Hudson, who took both the supreme pairs and single championships with his



Richard and Carol Rettie, Pedigree Cattle Calf Champion

homebred Pietrain cross gilts. Similarly, the reserve in both the supreme pairs and single championships went to Kent exhibitor Charles Bull with his Berkshires.

The pedigree cattle calf championship, judged by David Thornley, Derbyshire, saw the Aberdeen Angus take centre stage with Rettie's Eveline, a January born heifer from Richard and Carol Rettie, Perth. Reserve went to last years supreme exhibitor J&B Borlase, Hertfordshire, with their Simmental heifer, Sacombe Jacinta.

The group of three interbreed championship also judged by David Thornley was handed to the Beef Shorthorns comprising of Mineshop Masterclass from C. Nye, Cambridgeshire, Greenley Heathermaid Nancy and Greenly Nelly Floss, both from G.H and M. Towers, Welford. Reserve group going to the British Blue team.



Supreme Sheep Champion, Robert Garth and Sarah Priestley

Once again alongside the busy livestock rings, the tension was building for the youth competitions, the College Challenge supported by the C. Alma Baker Trust commenced on Friday, 17 teams (68 students) competed under the watchful eye of judges Tina Russell - cattle, Julie Stannage - sheep Charles Bull - pigs and Harry Bell and Colin Jarvis - fleeces, with top spot going to Newton Rigg A, second - Myerscough, third - Askham Bryan 1 and in fourth place was Hartpury team B.

Finally, the 2019 Young Stock Person of the Year sponsored by Dunbia, saw the beef championship going to Alexa Moore age 15 from Lincolnshire and the sheep championship to 17-year-old Charles Tester from Leicestershire. It was a fantastic turn out of enthusiastic young people!

Full results from the 2019 Winter Stock Festival can be found on the results page of our website www.winterstockfestival.co.uk



P&S Sellers with the Supreme Commercial Beef Champion



Chris Hudson, Supreme Pair and Single Champion

Interview with Vicky Robinson



In this edition of the Society News, we speak to Vicky Robinson, an East of England Agricultural Society funded Nuffield Scholar, on her journey in exploring the importance of farmer to farmer knowledge exchange in difficult times.

I was sitting in a cosy Norfolk kitchen talking to two farmers who were participating in a project I was running that inspired my Nuffield research.

Whilst the 'Beast from the East' struck outside and we applied delaying tactics before going to look at some pollen and nectar plots, the farmers commented on the value they had got from meeting other farmers involved in the project. This had been an unexpected but welcome part of their involvement and it got me thinking...

The project involved investigating a payment by results approach to agri-environment and the arable element was focusing on winter bird food and pollen and nectar plots. Having not been applied in these arable situations before, it was innovative and new. Getting the farmers together for farm walks or meetings was important for me as I have always felt that farmers have so much knowledge to share.

I consider myself very lucky to have grown up on an Oxfordshire farm which instilled a love for farming. This translated into my decision to focus on

agriculture rather than horses following my degree in International Agriculture and Equine Business Management degree at what is now the Royal Agricultural University. With an increasing focus on the environment, I decided this was the area I wanted to work in and have been involved in agri-environment schemes working for Natural England and its predecessors for 20 years. Predominately working on farms setting up and managing agri-environment agreements, but latterly in a national role providing technical advice on our current agri-environment schemes.

Completing the Worshipful Company of Farmers Challenge of Rural Leadership course in 2018 was the catalyst for me to apply for a Nuffield. This two-week course exposed me to a group of dynamic and inspirational people including two Australian Nuffield Scholars and provided me with the drive and confidence to apply.

“A Nuffield is about putting yourself out of your comfort zone”

I am one of nineteen 2019 Scholars who are covering a wide range of topics across several sectors. I am not being sector-specific, but to narrow down a broad subject, I am focusing on the importance of farmer to farmer knowledge exchange during times of change. In particular, when the change is being driven by external factors outside a farmers control. The original context for me was the changing agricultural policy in the UK, but as I have discovered, there are many other challenges which are common in all the countries I have visited. These range from trade policies to consumer trends or the one I think is having the most impact;



Bob Nixon, an Australian Scholar



Cotton in Tamil Nadu, Southern India

changing weather patterns resulting in issues with water availability. Looking at the importance of farmer to farmer knowledge exchange during these times and different approaches resulting in some key messages for the UK is my aim.

Having never travelled before I managed to visit more countries in seven months during 2019 than the rest of my life put together. A Nuffield is about putting yourself out of your comfort zone and I can definitely say I have achieved this!

The next steps...

I am over halfway through my research with my final trip to New Zealand in March and April. It is then head down to meet the deadline of the end of June for handing in my report before presenting at the 2020 Nuffield Conference in November. Trying to narrow down my key messages and summarise what I have learnt for my twelve-minute presentation is going to be another challenge.

I am incredibly grateful to The East of England Agricultural Society who have kindly provided additional sponsorship alongside Land Family Business and Hampden Bottom Farm; my main sponsor being the Central Regional Farmers Trust.

In our next issue of Society News, we will catch up with Vicky to see how the next stages of her Nuffield Scholarship have progressed



Meeting M.S. Swaminathan, renowned for his leading role in India's 'Green Revolution'

Cultiv8 is continuing to grow

Since the last Society news update, we managed to fit in a couple of meetings just before the decade came to a close. In October, we attended NFU Peterborough's meeting with key speakers, Helena Darragh from Wildlife Trust BCN and Martin Lines, talking about how the Nature Friendly Farming Network is playing a role in helping Defra form plans for the future. In November, we welcomed Tom Wilkinson, to explain how small businesses can use digital marketing to their advantage.

We kicked off our 2020 Cultiv8 programme in mid-February with guest speaker, Pete Garbutt, the Global Sustainable Sourcing Manager for McDonald's. It was a fascinating insight to hear first hand about the challenges of sustainability in food production for a company as large as McDonald's. Pete left us with some mind-blowing facts on the scale of their operations stating:

McDonald's sell more coffee than Starbucks, more chicken than KFC and feed an astonishing 1% of the population of the world every single day!

Thank you to everyone that came along for this evening, it was a great turnout, fantastic to see some new faces and was nice that so many people stayed for a drink afterwards.



Our joint November meeting with NFU Peterborough

Unfortunately, we had to postpone our April meeting with Heather Wildman, founder of Saviour Associates due to the ongoing situation. Although, at the time that this publication goes to print, we are trying to reschedule for another date or to hold remotely via video conferencing.

If you want to learn more about Cultiv8 and what we get up to, either visit our website or email us at cultiv8@eastofengland.org.uk. You don't need to be a Society member to come along, so if you know someone that could be interested, bring them along to one of our meetings.

OUR NEXT MEETING IN THE DIARY IS: 4th JUNE

Visit the Allerton Project, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

Please keep an eye on our Cultiv8 Facebook and Twitter for updates on future events, their format and dates are subject to change under present circumstances.

Alternatively, contact us at cultiv8@eastofengland.org.uk to sign up to our e-news to get the latest Society and Cultiv8 information straight into your inbox.



Pete Garbutt, McDonald's



Martin Lines, Nature Friendly Farming Network



Coronavirus: legal considerations for farms & estates

We completely understand that farmers would prefer a handshake deal, that long documents full of legalese are a nightmare, and that you'd rather not have to spend money on a lawyer if you can help it.

That said, the current crisis has thrown up issues where you need to get the basics right or risk claims and confusion down the line. In this article, we look at three areas: employment, rent variations and supply contracts.

On-farm employment

Heavily legislated, employment is an area where you absolutely must follow certain procedures or risk claims against you and being on the wrong end of the argument. There is some excellent online guidance, and we have published a Q&A for farm employers.

Key points

- Communicate and consult with employees.
- Check what individual contracts say about paid and unpaid leave, holidays and sick pay. If a spray operator feels unwell and self-isolates, under the new coronavirus measures they are entitled to statutory sick pay from day one. Whether they are entitled to *contractual sick* pay depends on the terms of their contract. Watch for special terms which apply to longstanding workers covered by Agricultural Wages Order provisions.
- If, by agreement, employment contracts are varied e.g. so that someone in the farm shop works three instead of five days a week for the next three months, make sure this is properly documented.

- If you are taking on extra hands for harvest/picking/packing, make sure you fulfil business-as-usual employer duties. Watch for the new rules in force from 6 April 2020 (e.g. all new employees and workers now have a right to a new-type statement of written particulars from their very first day of employment).

Rent agreements

Many farms have a small-scale office and workshop lettings. Where tenants are in trouble, landlords will need to take a view on how to deal with requests for rent reductions, suspensions and deferrals.

Key points

- Check the small print of tenancy agreements before you have substantive discussions (e.g. guarantors, interest on late payments, insurance clauses).
- If you reach an agreement verbally, confirm it in writing and ask the tenant to confirm their agreement so that you have a written record. An email exchange should be sufficient as long as it covers the key points.
- Be careful of agreeing with open-ended rent reductions or rent holidays. Make sure there is a clear end date set out in writing.

We have drawn up a template rent variation agreement for farmers to use with small on-farm businesses (see *contact details*).

Supply contracts

In some cases, even in the critical food supply chain, supply contracts are being impacted, whether because of illness or disruption in end-user markets.



Whether you are supplying goods or services or receiving them, your legal 'backstop' will generally depend on the terms of your contract, which may be verbal. Force majeure provisions in a written contract may help you but there are often strict rules about notification and, even if they do help, they may only delay the time for performing the contract. There are other doctrines that come into play in commercial contracts, such as frustration, but these are complex and relying on them is risky.

As a basic principle, trying to negotiate an agreement with the other party has to be the starting point, particularly where longstanding relationships are involved. Again, we would strongly advise putting that agreement in writing, even by email.

Roythornes teams are working to guide clients through what is a difficult time for everyone and have prepared a series of coronavirus-related guides. Please do get in touch with Julie Robinson (07730 760968) if you have any questions at all or would like particular guides or a copy of our template rent variation agreement emailing to you.

Oxbury Farm Credit

Oxbury is a new specialist bank designed by the agricultural sector for the sector.

Oxbury's flagship account is **Oxbury Farm Credit** – an exclusive input finance facility that provides farmers with a flexible, convenient and competitive alternative to a bank overdraft or trade finance.

Oxbury Farm Credit fully launches later in 2020 with 4 distributors: HL Hutchinsons; Frontier Agriculture; Mole Valley Farmers; and KW. Further expansion across the UK and across agricultural sectors will take over the coming months.

Farm inputs purchased with these distributors can be paid for from the available credit in the Oxbury Farm Credit account. On account opening a Direct Debit will be set up to take a minimum monthly payment of the balance, including monthly interest accrued.

However, there is also the flexibility to make payments at any time to reduce outstanding balances, giving farmers the freedom to repay to suit their cashflow. Each facility is subject to a small annual fee.

Each application is subject to a credit search and applicants may be required to provide a personal guarantee or provide security, depending on the amount of credit required and their credit rating.

Removes the burden of administration

Oxbury's technology is integrated with the distributor partners so that purchase invoices are automatically uploaded into Oxbury's secure online platform, which can be accessed 24 hours a day.

- The account can be viewed in real time
- Invoices can be queried, paid and monitored in one place
- Invoices can be paid immediately from other funds or placed on credit with Oxbury
- Oxbury repayments can be made

- ✓ A new, unique and modern input finance account for farmers
- ✓ Secure online platform accessible 24 hours a day
- ✓ Knowledgeable relationship managers that understand farm businesses

Who is eligible?

Oxbury Farm Credit is available to medium-to-large Arable and Dairy farmers through a farmer's existing trusted distributors.

We understand farm businesses

Oxbury Bank prides itself in building personal relationships between employees and customers. Oxbury will offer a personal human service, with relationship managers who understand farming, the agricultural sector and farmers' needs.

Chief executive and co-founder James Farrar says:

"Our founding team and investors are farmers and market leading agribusiness companies that farmers know and trust, coupled with the expertise needed to run a specialist bank".

Managing director and co-founder Nick Evans says:

"This innovative account solves the cashflow problem faced by farmers having to fund their inputs many months before receiving income from the sale of the produced goods, which has been holding back the growth of their farms and tying up valuable cash in the production cycle."

For more information visit: www.oxbury.com

1

A trusted introduction

Your trusted approved supplier will discuss Oxbury Farm Credit with you to explain how it works. They will guide you through the first part of the application form.

2

Decision time

Your requested loan amount will be underwritten by Oxbury. An Oxbury Relationship Manager will be in contact with you throughout the decision process and will be available to help with any questions.

3

Account availability

Oxbury will agree the credit limit, subject to status, and the funds are intended to be available to use in Q2 2020.

4

Manage your account

You can access and manage your Oxbury Farm Credit account via Oxbury's secure online and mobile banking services.



Drone imagery of scrapes

Biodiversity in the Nene Valley

– By Helena Darragh

The Wildlife Trust BCN (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire) explains its work with farmers and landowners to improve habitat and water quality through the provision of grant funding and advice in the Nene Valley.

Farming for the Future (FtF) is one of sixteen Nenescape Landscape Partnership projects running in the area, supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

Since the start of the project in 2018, we have worked to restore and create meadow and wetland habitats, supported capital items such as fencing and hardcore bases to improve water quality and helping to protect existing on-farm wildlife habitat through screening and signage along public footpaths. We have a small, easily accessible grant scheme available to farmers and landowners looking to do work of this sort within our project boundary that remains open for applications. Grants can work alongside existing Countryside Stewardship agreements.

Wetland restoration work at a site in Aldwinckle near Thrapston enables the cutting and removal of vegetation. Working with a local farmer, we secured grazing for the site to enable ongoing management. After a few months, with light now reaching the soil, smaller flowering plants including orchids, ragged robin and marsh marigold burst through the ground layer. We are looking forward to seeing the site transform over the coming years, reverting back to a botanically diverse haven.

Notably, last summer we worked with seven different landowners to create a series of shallow scrapes and ditches with the RSPB's rotary ditcher. Farmers with wet grassland sites with potential for restoration were selected as a result of earlier identification work in the valley. Using levelling data, we were able to plan for scrapes to be dug at the lowest points in fields so that water might be held here beyond the winter

months providing shallow, muddy pools suitable for wading birds such as lapwing, snipe and curlew. Features were created to enable farmers to continue to grazing and hay cutting regimes, working with their existing management, such as on Oundle Lodge Farm with John Gent.

Given the relentless rainfall we have had over the winter months, all of our scrapes have spent most of their time underwater, but as floodwaters have receded, it's been encouraging to revisit sites and see how this new habitat is developing to support a variety of wildlife.

We have also been working to restore wildflower meadows. More than 97% of our meadows have been lost nationally and so a primary aim of our work is to celebrate, protect and conserve the few remaining meadows that we have, and enable a better understanding of these crucial habitats and their management to local communities. There are many wonderful floodplain meadows along the Nene Valley, including those



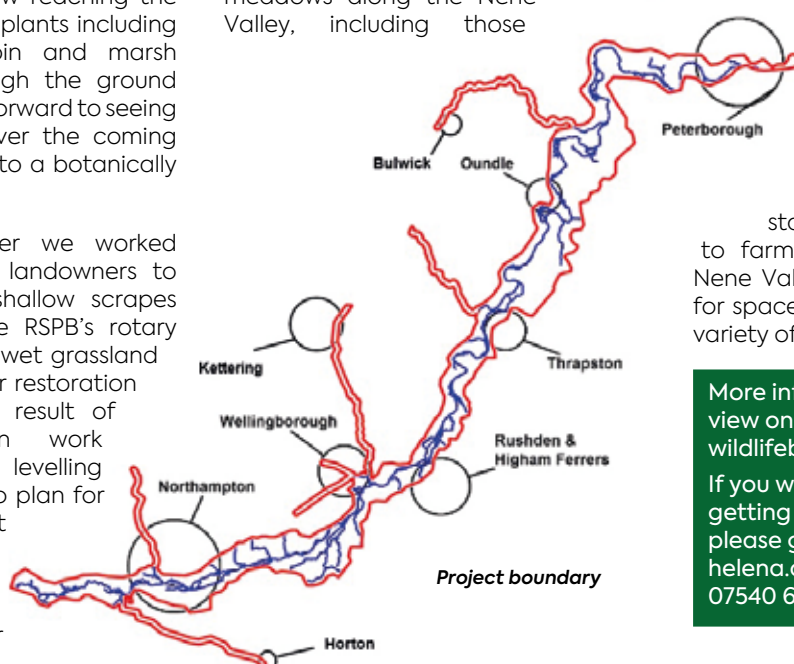
Marsh orchid - wetland restoration

on Oundle Lodge Farm and since starting this project, new wildflower meadows have been discovered in the Nene floodplain. Simple changes to management practices can improve these sites significantly for wildlife and help provide vital ecosystem services. We have identified a few sites to restore this year through broadcasting seed

and using green hay but would be very interested to work with more farmers interested in reverting arable land to meadows or improving existing sites.

We're also able to offer free Mid Tier and Higher Tier advice and assistance at any stage of the application process to farmers based anywhere in the Nene Valley and can provide funding for spaces on PA training courses at a variety of training centres.

Project Area



More information is available to view on our webpage: wildlifebcn.org/farming-future
If you would be interested in getting involved in this project, please get in touch: helena.darragh@wildlifebcn.org 07540 670229.

R.A.B.I teaming-up with other farming charities



The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution – R.A.B.I – provides financial support, practical care and guidance to farming people in need, of all ages.

R.A.B.I is teaming up with other farming charities to ensure people get the support they need over the coming weeks and months.

Coronavirus is already presenting major challenges, forcing everyone to change the ways they live, work and think. R.A.B.I, The Farming Community Network (FCN), The Addington Fund, Forage Aid and Scottish charity RSABI are joining forces under the Farming Help umbrella, which is also supported by The Prince's Countryside Fund.

By calling one number, 03000 111 999 (a Helpline operated by FCN), farmers in need can access free, impartial and confidential support and be connected to the relevant organisations. The Helpline is open daily from 7am-11pm. The aim is to ensure help and support remains accessible despite restrictions on meetings and movements. The key message the charities want to send out to farmers and their loved ones is: 'We are here for you – to listen, support and connect'.

Anyone who feels isolated and needs someone to talk to can pick up the phone and ring the Farming Help Helpline in complete confidence. It's essential that everyone has someone to talk to, be that us, or family and friends. Having someone to confide in, or consider a problem from a different perspective, can make all the difference. The farming community is well known for pulling together during difficult times which is why we must all support each other now.

www.rabi.org.uk

Get yourself connected!

The Farm Safety Foundation was established by NFU Mutual in 2014 as an independent and award winning charity dedicated to supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of the UK's farmers.

Their advice on looking after your mental wellbeing during this period of isolation and uncertainty is to **get yourself connected!**

The following recommendations come from their "A whole new world..." blog that can be found on their website at www.yellowwellies.org

So now, more than ever, we need to stay connected. We're talking about a new virtually connected world here... WhatsApp groups, Facetime, Messenger – anything that can get you face-to-face with your family, friends and favourite people – start a virtual Book Club, organise an online pub quiz, join a virtual choir or take part in some virtual exercise classes.

You are what you eat

A healthy diet can help keep your immune system working well – so what better time to cut back on snacks, start exploring new recipes and eating a range of healthy foods?

Stay fit

In a Farmers' Weekly survey around half of respondents (55%) said they exercised outside work – A third said they did so once a week or more. One third (32%) blamed a lack of time as the main reason for not working out – come on people... there are 1,440 minutes in every day – use 30 of them for physical activity!

Make your bed

Whatever you decide to do and however you decide to spend your time during the coming months, bear in mind Admiral William H. McRaven's speech for the graduating class from the University of Texas at Austin...



"If you want to change the world ... start off by making your bed."

The simple act of making your bed can give you the lift you need to start your day. You will have achieved one goal and this can provide you with the satisfaction to end the day right.

This is **BACKING BRITISH FARMING** so keep it going. Keep spreading nothing but kindness.

At this time, the only thing more contagious than this virus is hope!

The speaker at the postponed Shuttleworth Lecture, was going to be Nick Evans from Oxbury, The Agricultural Bank, please see details on this new specialist bank on page 14.

Fitzwilliam (Milton) meet in January

In late January, the East of England Agricultural Society hosted a meet of local pack, the Fitzwilliam (Milton) Hunt. Presented with a bright and dry Saturday morning, the meet was well attended providing an opportunity to chat with local land owners, hunt supporters, farmers and Society members.

Just a short drive from Alwalton to Milton, Dean and Kevin from the maintenance team kindly towed the Society trailer by tractor to the event, even assisting the driver of a horse

box whose clutch had failed in the park entrance. The trailer, as pictured, provided the perfect backdrop from which the Chairman, some of our Trustees and staff supporting the morning, served port and other traditional fayre including hugely popular pork pies and sausage rolls sourced locally from Robinsons of Glatton.

A large mounted field went on to enjoy a good days hunting in the park and the day's cap went to the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution.



Equifest & Just Dogs Live

Whilst at the time of going to press, planning is well underway for both **Just Dogs Live (10-12 July)** and **Equifest (19-23 August)**. We are very conscious that this could change so please refer to their respective websites for regular updates.

Visit www.justdogslive.co.uk and www.equifest.org.uk

RECORDS BROKEN IN THE 2020 BIG FARMLAND BIRD COUNT

1500

Farmers took part more than ever before. They covered more than 1.4 acres of British farmland.



MORE THAN 120 SPECIES



The most commonly seen species were blackbirds and woodpigeons, seen by over 75% of our participants. Robins, blue tits and pheasants were seen by over 70% of the farmers

25 RED-LISTED SPECIES SEEN

With 9 appearing in the 25 most commonly seen species list. Fieldfares, starlings, linnets and lapwings were the four most abundant red listed species recorded.



HALF OF PARTICIPANTS ARE IN AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES

36% are also providing some form of extraseed feed for birds, either through growing wild bird seed mixes, or by providing additional grain through scatter feeding or via hoppers.



Open Farm Sunday

As with many other events at the moment, LEAF Open Farm Sunday, set to take place on 7 June 2020, had had to be postponed and will instead take place on Sunday 20 September 2020. Pushing the date back to September will be a great learning experience for the general public as they get to witness a different part of the agricultural calendar.

Make sure to check out the LEAF Open Farm Sunday website to stay up to date with this year's event and to see where your local open farm is that you can visit on 20 September. Learn more about the event at www.farmsunday.org



Our Members – Tim Beaver

We would like to give a shout out to one of our Society members, Tim Beaver, for his journey of planning to run the Rutland half marathon to raise money for the Children's Brain Tumour Research Centre, University of Nottingham. Although the Rutland Half Marathon has been cancelled due to the ongoing situation, Tim still plans on running the 21km and has raised a brilliant amount of money so far for a great cause.

Visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/timothy-beaver to read Tim's story and donate if you can!





Well, what a difference a month makes

After an incredibly busy January and February with new events and the return of successful shows I now find myself sitting in my office trying to keep at least 2m from anyone else. Mind you I'm the only one in SGS at the moment so that's not difficult.

January was a superb start to 2020 with the extra Jack Whitehall concert, Dog Show, new Motorhome Sale day and then closely followed by February featuring the return of the Motorsport with Attitude event which brought stock cars back to the venue. For those of us who remember the old Stock Car Racing track in the south car park, it certainly brought back memories as well as the smell of petrol and tyres!

We also had Floodex (a water management event) at the same time as the entire country was flooded as well as a fast-food show, Self-Build Homes event as well as cycling and conferencing in February.

Now we're in April and when we should be enjoying hosting the Annual Easter Antiques Festival at the start of another busy summer season, yet we're now 2-3 months from a show taking place.

We're very lucky actually as the vast majority of our large spring events have now moved to July, August and September. For instance, Truckfest has moved from May to the August Bank Holiday weekend and the MCN

Motorcycle Festival will now be 19th & 20th September. If your plans for Easter included the Antiques Festival best to scrub that date out and come here on the 3rd & 4th July instead!

So, in the meantime we will paint and fix and replace and cut and feed the grass – perhaps get the jobs done that the shows get in the way of. Hopefully sooner rather than later we will be back to normal and visitors can come to shows and enjoy our wonderful venue although I might be a bit precious about how they treat our grass!

Jason Lunn
Venue Director



Keeping the farm in the family

Our Agricultural team provide advice to farming businesses and families on the wide range of property, commercial and private matters affecting those that own agricultural land or businesses. What sets us apart from other Agri legal teams is that the majority of the team have personal experience working on a farm and within the Agricultural sector. We fully understand what matters to you and how your business operates.

The Legal 500 commends us for our Agriculture and Estates advice:

"They understand the personality and idiosyncrasies of their clients."

"The Greenwoods [GRM] team is a friendly and dynamic team, which strikes the perfect balance of being approachable and giving first-class advice."

"All of the team members are willing to give their honest opinions on matters, which has become an increasingly rare asset. The team work extremely closely, which gives them a wide knowledge base, and you always get the feeling that you are getting many minds for the price of one!"



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CEO'S UPDATE



May I start by sending everyone reading this my best wishes for good health and hopes that the current crisis will not affect you or your loved ones too badly.

I am writing this from my home office in the North Yorkshire Moors National Park during a very busy lambing time, and the month when 40,000 tourists would normally be arriving to view the famous daffodils in neighbouring Farndale. This April, the roads are exceptionally quiet and the only traffic movements are vans bringing home deliveries of much-needed supplies to our remote location.

Observing social distancing isn't a problem here, but as I go through our paddocks onto the moor for my daily walk, I notice that my neighbours have a forest of markers dotting their pastures as like me, they are busy reducing the current infestation of moles. It appears the wet, but mild winter has allowed the rabbit population to increase again too. This is a genuine year on year problem for local farmers and we are literally overrun each summer with resulting and extensive crop damage. I can only hope that rabbit meat soon becomes a fashionable local source of protein.

My thoughts are very much on the impact of Covid-19 on the Society, our members, Trustees and staff, and of course the event organisers and businesses that depend on the showground. The good news is that despite the postponements and cancellations, most event organisers have asked for their deposits to be rolled forward and alternative dates to be allocated.

This is an exceptionally difficult time for everyone, but as the Chairman observed in his briefing, our team has stepped up to the challenges. The management team are finding that the workload has increased exponentially as in addition to the normal duties we are all responding to situations as they emerge and evolve. We are closely following Government advice and have adopted the furlough scheme for those members of staff

who cannot be redeployed onto useful work. Others have been provided with IT equipment so that we can continue to operate in support of various initiatives including helping the many parents who are now home educating and of course the Marshal Papworth students who were already in the UK and now appear to be here for the duration. The Marshal Papworth committee are working hard to make sure the 2021 course is fully planned. Arrangements for the 2021 Kids Country programme are underway and everyone is determined to make sure that the exciting and innovative proposals are delivered; I believe this will be a huge success.

One aspect of Covid-19 is that it has raised public awareness of where our food comes from and how it arrives on the plate. Food production and processing are essential UK industries and we have the capacity and capability to be even more productive, so this global event should encourage our politicians to focus on the policies that underpin our agricultural practices.

I do believe that the East of England Agricultural Society has a significant role to play in providing support to local farmers and producers and we are exploring ways that we can provide advice, information and access to practical help. We plan to provide regular news and updates through our website and other media.

Finally, this enforced restriction on our daily lives is showing unexpected benefits for the environment with less pollution from unnecessary travel and it has perhaps made us all more reflective of the value of access to the outdoors and appreciative of the time spent with family.

Alistair Beattie
Interim CEO

Our Staff



Congratulations Aziz

We would like to give a huge congratulations to Aziz Moussalek, pictured above right, in our finance team for becoming an Associate Chartered Management Accountant (ACMA) and Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA).

The qualification is accredited by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) which involved a massive total of 17 exams and we are all very proud of his achievement. Well done Aziz!

Long service

We would also like to highlight three of our employees who have reached significant milestones of working for the Society during 2020. A huge congratulations and thank you to Julie Peel who has been working at the Society for 10 years, Val Brooks for 15 years and to Kevin Puttrel for an astonishing 35 years of service. Whilst we were all able to gather and celebrate Julie's milestone with speeches and cake, Kevin's work anniversary was reached during lockdown although he is one of three skeleton staff still working hard on the maintenance of the site, it was still marked with virtual off site congratulations from his other colleagues. As Val's work anniversary is early May we are yet to know whether we will mark this in person or virtually – but once everyone stops working from home both occasions will be properly acknowledged.



www.eastofengland.org.uk



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[East of England Agricultural Society](https://www.linkedin.com/company/eoeagriculturalsociety)



CULTIV



The membership group for young professionals
working in the rural sector.

If you know anyone this could be suited to,
please encourage them to join.

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