

with David Himelfield

it's our world

GREEN & GORGEOUS

It's a bumper year for black grouse

RARE black grouse have had a record-breaking breeding season thanks to the warm, dry conditions in June, experts said.

The annual breeding count of the bird in England has revealed that each hen has produced more than four chicks on average – almost four times the numbers of young reared in previous years and Yorkshire is faring well.

Most hens managed to rear chicks and some were spotted with 10 or 11 young, which is "quite exceptional" for black grouse, according to Dr Phil Warren, a specialist in the species with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust.

He added:

"This is all in stark contrast to last year when breeding productivity was appalling and one sample of 35 hens found they only raised seven chicks between them."

"The difference in breeding productivity between this year and last year is down to the weather conditions in June when the chicks hatch."

"Last year it was cold and wet and this year it has been warm and dry. Warm dry conditions mean an abundance of insects such as sawfly larvae which young chicks depend on when they first hatch."

Black grouse were once common in most of southern England, from Dartmoor to Norfolk, but are now found only in four upland areas in Northumberland, County Durham, Cumbria and Yorkshire.

Cub watch for Panda

THE UK's only female giant panda has been placed on 24-hour surveillance after the latest hormone tests indicate she could be pregnant.

Edinburgh Zoo's panda keepers are now monitoring Tian around the clock.

Experts are not certain at this stage if Tian is indeed pregnant but the latest hormone tests are said to show positive signs and she is now being closely watched for signs of



■ **CLEARING THE LAND:** Chef Richard Bliton with his rare breed pigs, named Chop, Sausage, Del and Rodney (Trotter)

Chef harnesses natural pig power

WHO needs a lawnmower when you've got pig power?

Award-winning chef Tim Bliton has gone the whole hog when it comes to clearing land for an orchard to serve his restaurant. The Spiced Pear, Sheffield Road, Hepworth.

Tim, who made his name on TV and at the Butcher's Arms, Hepworth, recently

bought the four rare breed pigs, named Chop, Sausage, Del and Rodney (Trotter).

Mr Bliton said: "We've brought them in to clear the land around the restaurant so we can eventually put in raised beds and an orchard to grow our own produce."

"They're certainly much more fun than a lawnmower – a bit smellier though!"

Kids grow into the job of creating roof

AS lesson topics go it could have been a nailed-on candidate for Bore of the Year if not the century.

Environmentally-sustainable roofs may not normally hold much interest for a class of nine-year-olds.

But by asking them to help with the growing of one, it suddenly became a different story.

Building contractors GB Building Solutions asked Year 4 children at Meltham C of E Primary School to contribute to the growing of a living roof for the University of Huddersfield's new £22.5m Learning and Leisure Centre.

With drainage specialists ABG Ltd, of Meltham Mills, selected to provide the scheme's new Blue Roof, it was inevitable the school from the village would want to get involved.

The roof provides all the benefits of a vegetated roof but with the added advantage of rainwater storage within the build up.

This storage capacity allows the rain water to be gathered and released at a rate suitable for the local conditions, helping prevent flooding during periods of high rainfall.

GB Building Solutions joined ABG in a presentation to the year group to introduce the concept of a planted roof that helps the environment.

The following day, 60 children and their teachers visited an exhibition living roof at the ABG site and jumped

at the invitation to get their hands dirty potting up seedlings. Each child has taken away their own plant to water and care for over the summer holidays.

Next month the children will deliver their thriving young plants to the university site, ready for installation on the roof.

Year 4 teacher Kate Watson said: "The children have been so enthused and have learned so much."

"It is amazing to think that a green roof is just down the road from our school and we didn't know. It has really inspired them."

GB Building Solutions provides property and construction solutions from site finding and development funding, full design, management and construction of new and refurbished facilities, through to aftercare and asset management.

Meltham-based ABG is a market leading developer and manufacturer of high performance drainage systems for use in a wide range of civil engineering, environmental and building projects.



■ **ECO-PROJECTS:** ABG operations director Peter Van Ruiten with Year 4 Class 9 pupils and teacher Kate Watson from Meltham CE Primary School. Left: The University of Huddersfield



Teamwork creates brand new school haven

STAFF, parents and pupils at Birdssee First and Denby Dale Parish supplied the compost. Project co-ordinator