



Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Groups Newsletter November 2023

We know the autumn is always a busy time of year for you all and that the introduction of the new SFI actions has given you another thing to add to your to do list. These changes were one of the reasons why we set up our groups so please do let your facilitator know if you need help or training on certain elements of the new scheme.

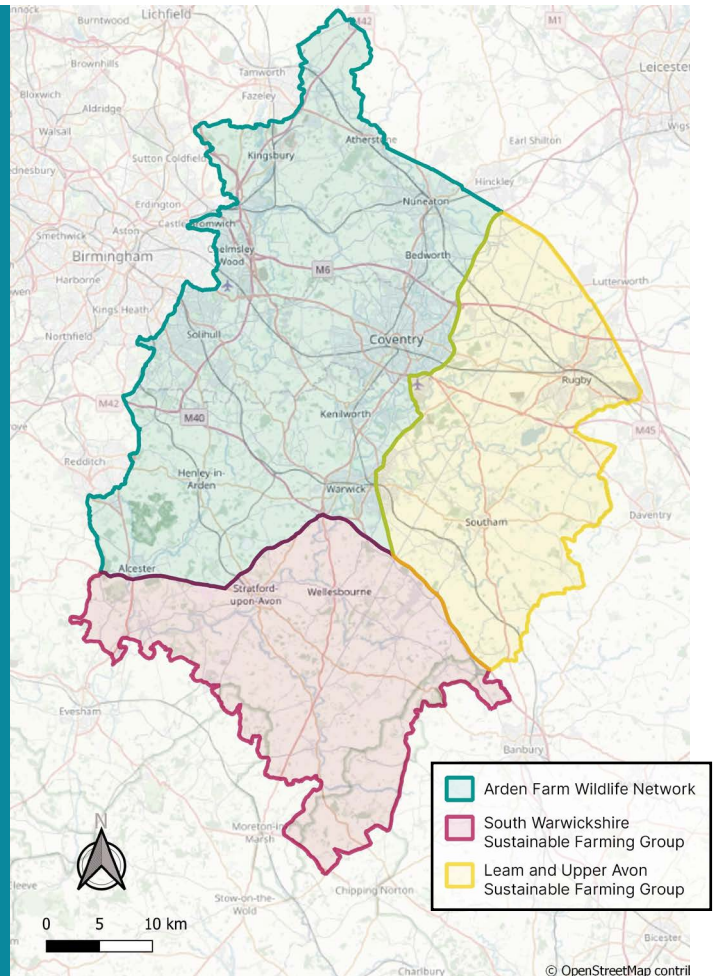
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Free Trees

The orders are with the nurseries at the moment and we are organising pick up dates for early in the New Year. This year we will have some of the team from Heart of England Forest at the collection points to discuss best practice tree planting. If you have any woodland planting ideas then they will be happy to discuss those too.

Making More Magical Meadows

It took a while with the changeable weather in the back end of September but we have finally managed to get the meadows sown with wild flowers. If you

are interested in creating a wildflower meadow of your own then please do get in touch with sally.eadon@wkwat.org.uk as we will be looking for meadows for next year's project.

UK Farmer Group Discussion Network

Several of our Warwickshire group members are already members of this network as well. They have benefited greatly from the opportunities to discuss important issues with senior decision makers in government.



Established in 2018, this Network involves farmers from almost 200 independent grass roots farmer groups across the UK. It is a completely independent (non-government) network exclusively for farmers, managed by The University of Exeter. Through surveys, on-line meetings, exchange visits and information newsletters, the Network provides an opportunity for farmers to consider and discuss a huge range of issues including government policy, technical farm management issues, public attitudes, food supply chain (retailer) relationships etc. An important feature of the Network is the programme of external speakers where Network members have the opportunity to meet with very senior decision makers in public, private and third sector life who have a direct influence on the farming sector.

Network members can get involved in as much or as little as they wish or can simply use the Network as a source of information. It is free to join, and members can leave at any time. Please click on this link (or copy the link into your browser) to join the Network www.farmergroupdiscussion.org/join

If you have any questions contact Alex Inman at a.inman@exeter.ac.uk or mobile 07895 061633.

Local Nature Partnership Conference

Date: 13th November 2023

Time: 9.45 am – 4 pm

Venue: Warwickshire County Council, Northgate House, Warwick

The conference is to outline development of Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Warwickshire and involve you in the process and to help raise awareness of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). It will cover topics such as: Identifying key species and habitats that need particular action for recovery to include in the LNRS; Catchment Partnerships' river and water quality projects; Sustainable Farming Groups activity; Progress on landscape-scale nature recovery delivery; Discuss key topics including species recovery, green and blue infrastructure, urban and rural aspects of nature recovery.

For more information visit: <https://wclsnp.wixsite.com/localnature>

To book a place please email wclsnp@wkw.org.uk

Innovation for Agriculture Farm of the Future study tours

The RASE Farm of the Future events are delivered by Ifa to help farmers navigate routes to net zero by changing farm practices and demonstrating farming

systems. The study tours are over 2 days with food and accommodation paid for. You will visit a number of different farms looking at regenerative farming practices. More information here:

<https://www.i4agri.org/events>

Low Carbon Agri show

Save the date 6th and 7th March 2024. This event will showcase ways to address climate change through generation of renewable energy, implementing low carbon technology and best practice in carbon and environmental management.

Update from Arden Farm Wildlife Network

Events held since last newsletter

■ Diverse crop rotations and innovative crops at Weethley Farm, Ragley Estate

This was a lovely summer evening joint with the South Warwickshire group with a great bbq of Ragley meat afterwards – thank you Ragley for hosting us. We discussed poppies, meadow foam, linseed, and Wildfarmed wheat Wildfarmed

■ Grass and Flower identification at Fossdene Manor, Combrook

This was our annual grass and flower id session which, this year, was run by Sally Eadon. Sally's grass id book was very useful www.nhbs.com/a-field-guide-to-grasses-sedges-and-rushes-book

■ Planning meeting with SFI update

There was a great turn out which I'm not sure was because of the food or the SFI update. This was a good opportunity to discuss what is needed to help you with





your SFI applications. There will be some winter meetings to help with applications and management plans.

Events planned



How to complete an SFI application

5th December (date tbc)

Time: TBC

Venue: Pleasance Farm, Chase Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 1PR



Reducing anthelmintic use revisited with Lesley Stubbs

Date: 9th January

Time: TBC

Venue: Pleasance Farm, Chase Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 1PR



SFI Management Plans

How to complete an SFI soil management plan using AHDB soil health card

Date: 6th February

Time: 10.30am – 12.30pm

Venue: Pleasance Farm, Chase Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 1PR

How to complete a hedgerow management plan using 'Healthy Hedgerows' app

Date: 6th February

Time: 1pm – 2.30pm

Venue: Pleasance Farm, Chase Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 1PR



Visit to Lamport AgX, Northamptonshire

This is Agrovista's trials site looking at many aspects of soil health

Date: 27th February

Further information and booking details will be emailed out nearer each event

Update from Leam and Upper Avon Sustainable Farming Group

Events held since last newsletter:

■ Butterfly walk and talk with Butterfly conservation

Mike Slater and Tara Higgs showed us round Ryton Meadows with all of the different habitats and management techniques they use there that can be adapted for the farm environment.

Mike's book has all of these management techniques and more (www.warwickshire-butterflies.org.uk/book.php). Attendees were also encouraged to set up their own butterfly transects at home to monitor their populations using this sheet from Butterfly Conservation as guidance (link to field margin assessment on rural hub).

■ Mob grazing and Pasture for Life at Hill Farm, Watergate

Emily and Mark showed us around their farm and discussed their mob grazing strategy with excellent advice given from Andy Rummig, an experienced mob grazer and Pasture for Life member.

Andy's 10 top tips:

1. What are your objectives and why?
2. Know your grazing area in hectares/ acres and your mob weight
3. Have a good fencing kit- quality energizer and fast easy to use fencing
4. Invest in water infrastructure, know your flow rate at end of pipe
5. Record days per field, cells per field throughout the grazing period
6. Look at residuals- change cell size depending on what you see and want the next day

7. Watch the weather- actively decide between sacrifice area or not

8. Keep a lesson learned journal, and re read it- every issue is a learning opportunity – revisit your objectives

9. Join pasture for life – lots of support and visit opportunities

10. Enjoy- if you are not enjoying managing and doing your mob grazing then change it

More information on Pasture For Life here (www.pastureforlife.org/).

The benefit of summer catch crops with Severn Trent. James Chapman showed us around his summer catch crops funded by STEPS and discussed the multiple benefits he has seen on his soils and crops using these catch crops the last few years, along with no till methods.

Next Events:



Planning meeting, SFI update and discussion, and buffet

Date: 7th November

Time: 5pm – 8pm

Venue: Napton Cidery



Accessing the Future Farming Resilience Fund for farm business advice

Date: December (date tbc)

Venue: Webinar

Update from South Warwickshire Group

Events held since last newsletter:

■ Diverse crop rotations and innovative crops at Weethley Farm, Ragley Estate

A joint event run with the Arden Group (see above)



■ Cover crops revisited, Ditchford Farm, near Shipston

As requested, a return visit to look at the effect the cover crops have had on the soil and follow-on crops. It was extremely interesting and we were able to see a direct comparison with neighbouring fields where cover crops hadn't been used which showed the cover crops were beneficial to soil structure, water retention and subsequent crop germination and yield. Also received useful info about SFI payments for cover crops; and afterwards enjoyed a beer brewed on the farm!

Events planned:



Future-proofing your water supply

Date: 8th November

Time: 10.30am – 12.30pm

Venue: Bordon Hill Nurseries, CV37 9RY



SFI update and event review

Date: 6th December

Time: TBC

Venue: TBC

As discussed at our planning meeting at the beginning of the year, I am working on a date and venue for a social to watch, 'Kiss the Ground' a film about how regenerating the world's soils can completely and rapidly stabilise Earth's climate, restore ecosystems and create abundant food supplies.

Events open to all groups:



Soil Mentor app training and regen ag indicators

Date: 21st November

Time: 10am – 1.30pm

Venue: Pleasance Farm, Chase Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 1PR



Collection of Warwick District and Solihull Borough Free Trees (for those people who have ordered them earlier this year)

Date: 16th January

Time: 10am – 1pm

Venue: Grounds Farm, Kenilworth, CV8 1PP

This is for LUASFG and AFWN groups. SWSFG will have a different pick-up location in January to be confirmed closer to the time.

Help, advice and monitoring

One to one Advice

Sally Eadon is available for 1-1 advice on ELMS and other funding opportunities, managing for wildlife on your farm and sustainable farming practices. If you would like her help or have any questions then you can email her at sally.eadon@wkwat.org.uk call her on 07495 457132 or speak to her at the next event.

Monitoring

A link to Local wildlife groups in on the website, you can contact these groups to report sightings of different species and to enquire about surveying.

Recording sightings to Warwickshire Biological Records Centre helps to build the picture of wildlife that is present across the county and will inform nature recovery plans. Please submit any sightings at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/environment-ecology/warwickshire-biological-records-centre including species name, date and location.

Kings Frontier Seeds

If you are ordering any seed Kings Game cover and Crops are offering a 10% discount on seed purchases for all members. If you are interested in making use of this offer, then please contact Meehal.grint@frontierag.co.uk. Meehal



USEFUL RESOURCES

We will continue to keep the newsletter list up to date and move previously mentioned useful resources and websites on to Warwickshire Rural Hub website found here:

[Useful websites – Warwickshire Rural Hub.](#)

[Innovative Farmers](#)

This new look website is full of resources

[Environment glossary](#)

The Royal Countryside Fund Break free from environmental jargon with the Royal Countryside Fund glossary of terms

[GREATsoils | AHDB](#)

Practical information on soil management and links to soils research

[State of Nature Report 2023](#)

The latest report has been released which includes an update on farmland wildlife.

[Oxford Real Farming Conference](#)

4 – 5th January 2024

Tickets on sale now

is also able to offer one to one advice on any site-specific issues with establishment and management of their mixes, including game cover, cover crops, wild bird seed mixes and flower/pollen and nectar mixes.

Local and national initiatives and funding in the area

In previous newsletters we have listed lots of the funding opportunities on this page but as there are so many now we have moved these to a dedicated page on the Rural Hub Website

[Funding opportunities - Warwickshire Rural Hub](#)

We will only list the new opportunities on this page in the future:

■ Sustainable Farming Incentive SFI Handbook for the SFI 2023 offer - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ Apply now for a calf housing grant – Farming (blog.gov.uk)

■ [Slurry infrastructure round 2](#) is now open