



Leam & Upper Avon Sustainable Farming Group



Arden Farm Wildlife Network



South Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Group

Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Groups Newsletter Spring 2024

Hopefully we are now coming to the end of a very wet winter and the spring blossom is just starting to show. There is so much going on in the farming world at the moment that we are struggling to keep up with the changes so feel for you actually having to get on top of the changes and do the day to day work. Our job is to help you try and understand all the new things coming your way whether that is new funding streams, carbon and natural capital trading or different land management options. Please do let your facilitator know what you need help with, and we can try and organise some training. If you need help with something there are probably plenty of other people needing the same information.

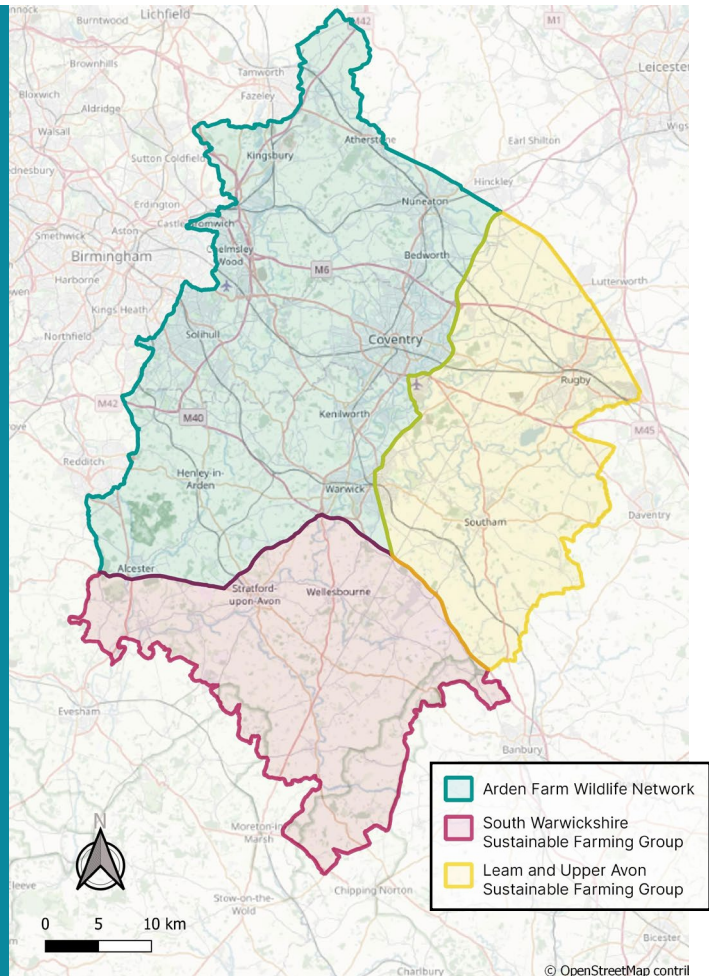
Best wishes,
Jane, Zoe, Kirsty, Imogen
and Sally

Jane Hampson
info@ruralhub.org.uk
Warwickshire Rural Hub

Zoe Bell
zoecbell@outlook.com
07980 771872
Arden Farm Wildlife Network

Kirsty Righton
kirstyrighton@gmail.com
07866 342373
South Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Network

Sally Eadon
sally.eadon@wkw.org.uk
07495 457132
Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
Agricultural Land Advisor



Wellesbourne Campus

Free trees

Over 24,500 free tree and hedge plants were given out to farmers across Warwickshire in January, with the help of Heart of England Forest Team. Thank you to Warwick District Council, Stratford District Council and Solihull Borough Council for funding these.

Hopefully they have all been planted so please do email in your grid reference or what3words reference and photos as requested.

Thank you to all of those that helped out this year. Hopefully we will be organising the same again next year.

Mapping for future funding

You may think it is a strange thing to ask for, but when you join our sustainable farming groups we ask for your SBI numbers. These numbers are really useful for mapping the extent of our group membership. The grants that we apply for, to support the groups and any additional projects, often want to know the extent of our membership. Your SBI numbers are not shared with anyone else and maps are not used for any other purpose other than to support these funding bids and report back to our current funders. If you have had an email from Sally asking for your SBI number then please do respond or send a quick text to 07495 457132 with your name and SBI.



RUSSELL SAVORY

Big Farmland Bird Count raffle – win a barn owl box!

Thank you to all of you who took part in the Big Farmland Bird Count this year. We do hope you enjoyed taking some time to admire your lovely birds. This year we have asked you send us a copy of your results so we can keep a record of species for the groups that will help us apply for future funding. As a reward, we will enter you into a raffle to win 1 of 3 bird boxes. The top prize is a barn owl box so do make sure you get your entries in. The raffle draw date will be 21st March and we will be accepting entries up until the 20th so there's still time to take part.

AgZero+ research on farmer uptake of net-zero farming management practices

AgZero+ is an ambitious five-year research programme supporting the UK's transition towards domestic food production that is sustainable, carbon-neutral and has a positive effect on nature.

To meet these objectives, the study will conduct interviews with farmers around three key themes:

- Operator characteristics (e.g. age, farming background, experience in scheme participation.)
- Farm characteristics (e.g. farm size, farming system, etc.)
- Adoption of farm management practices (e.g. types of practices to reduce GHG/ enhance biodiversity/capture and store carbon, and reasons and process of adoption.)

These interviews will last around 30–40 minutes and can be done online, via telephone or in-person, depending on the preference of the participant. Participants

will also be compensated £50 for their time in this study.

For further information on this project <https://agzeroplus.org.uk>

If you would like to take part in these interviews contact Hermann Kam at herkam@ceh.ac.uk.

The Loders Renewables Conference

This is a new event and will take place at Merevale Hall on 16 May 2024. It will bring together speakers from across the sector to provide insight into industry trends and real-life experiences for new opportunities. Book your place by clicking here: www.lodders.co.uk/renewables-conference

Update from Arden Farm Wildlife Network

Events held since last newsletter:

■ How to apply for SFI

This was a relaxed run through of an SFI real application. We went through all the

errors that you may come across during the application process and had a discussion of eligibility of different options.

■ Reducing Anthelmintics use in sheep and cattle

Wormer usage has an impact on soil biology and affects nutrient cycling. So to get better pasture management and increase soil biodiversity, reducing wormer usage is essential. In addition wormer resistance is becoming more and more of a problem. We were joined by Lesley Stubbings and Nerys Wright in a follow up to the workshop we held last year. The first half of the meeting was an update about the methods that can be used and then we had a discussion with members that had already started to implement changes. A lot of resources are available on these websites: [SCOPS | Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep](#) and [COWS – Control of Worms Sustainably](#). FEC (Faecal egg counts) sampling is key to the success of these methods and here are a couple of links to labs which take samples: [Techion](#) and [Biobest labs](#)

You can also use the vet visits funded by the Animal Health and Welfare scheme to discuss sustainable wormer usage: [SFI annual health and welfare review](#) (www.gov.uk)

■ Soil and hedge management plan

Amanda Bennett from AHDB presented us with the [soil health scorecard](#) they have developed to help record and monitor changes in soils and identify where actions should be targeted. The best time to start using the scorecard is in the autumn when the soil wets up, so start planning for later in the year, identifying which fields to target etc. This training session showed us that a soil management plan can be more than a document to store in a drawer and just bring out for inspections. All the other



Hedgerow assessment training



AHDB info on soil management can be found here: <https://ahdb.org.uk/greatsoils>.

In the afternoon Sally Eadon ran through the use of the [Healthy Hedgerow app](#) to use for the SFI HRW1 hedge management plan. We had a great discussion on what the definition of a gap is! For those that want an answer – it is where the canopy of the shrubs do not meet.

Events planned:

Please also look at the events in the ‘open to all’ section.



Members planning meeting

Date: 16th April

Time: 6.30pm–8.30pm

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

This will include a meeting followed by a talk/discussion (subject to be confirmed).

There are lots more in the pipeline and I will let you know as soon as I have got dates sorted.

Update from Leam and Upper Avon Sustainable Farming Group

Events held since last newsletter:

■ **Planning meeting and SFI update**

In November, everyone came up with some great ideas for future events including using Land App, visits to Tim Parton and Leicestershire Cheeses, pond and ditch management, herbal ley management, thistle management, agroforestry and rainwater harvesting and many more. Do look out for these events in the future and let us know if any more ideas come to mind.

Sally also ran through a few of the most relevant SFI options and gave some tips on how to apply for SFI.

■ **Bird ringing demonstration**

In January, the West Midlands Ringing Group gave a fantastic bird ringing demonstration, which gave everyone the chance to see some common birds up close, such as blue tit, blackbird and long-tailed tit. The group have also provided some good advice on how to create wildlife-friendly scrapes for wading birds within less productive field corners and boggy ground and have said they are available for surveying and bird ringing across the county (details in the help, advice and monitoring section). Thanks to Rebecca at Hodnell Manor for hosting us.

■ **Hedge laying course**

On 1st February, the weather was kind to us for once for the hedge laying training, run by the brilliant Dave Bull. The group was a good size to get some quality 1-1 tuition with Dave on how to lay a Midlands style hedge, and everybody left much more confident in laying their own hedges. Thanks to the Jeffries at Newbold Grounds Farm for hosting us.

■ **Land App training webinar**

On 26th February we held a webinar with Land App to go through how to use it and its different features. Land App is an easy-to-use free mapping platform that’s been around since 2016 and can be used to help you with Countryside Stewardship or SFI options. Sign up for free here: <https://thelandapp.com>. The link to the recording can be found here: www.ruralhub.org.uk/environmental-farming

Next events:

We have lots of events in the pipeline including a grassland and wildflower ID session in May and a visit to Tim Parton in June. We will update you with dates and details soon. Please also look at the events in the ‘open to all’ section.

Update from South Warwickshire Group

Events held since last newsletter:

■ **Future-proofing your water supply**

Malcolm Tanner and Russ Woodcock guided us round the variety of methods they have for capturing and reusing water in their system at Bordon Hill Nurseries. It highlighted the many areas of water management that are beneficial to, and easily transferable into a farming system.

■ **SFI update**

James Brown and Laura Negus from Brown & Co gave a comprehensive review of the





SFI actions along with considerations when deciding on which to implement on your farm and tips for applying. They answered questions and also provided information on integration of SFI with any existing Stewardship schemes.

■ Free trees collection

13,299 trees were handed out to 38 South Warwickshire farmers. We were also able to enjoy a catch up with hot drinks and biscuits. Thanks go to Hugh Forsyth and his family for the use of their barns for the sorting and collection.

■ Screening of the film 'Kiss the Ground'

The film generated a lively discussion about how regenerative agriculture practices can benefit our soils, stop erosion and increase health and profitability of crops; as well as the role of SFI in supporting us to transition to this method of farming. There is interest in learning more about first-hand farmer experiences of overcoming challenges faced during the transition to regen ag.

Events planned:

Please also look at the events in the 'open to all' section.



Members planning meeting

Date: 20th March

Time: 6.30–8.30pm

Venue: The George Inn, Lower Brailes OX15 5HN

This will include a simple supper and overview of the Fresh Food Strategy for Stratford-upon-Avon and South Warwickshire by Rosemary Collier of University of Warwick and our own group member, Olivia Hatch, Green Councillor.



Visit to Overbury Estate with Jake Freestone

Date: 17th April

Time: 10am

Venue: Nr Tewkesbury, Glos



Success with small-scale diversification

Date: 8th May

Time: 6.30–8.30pm

Venue: Talton Lodge, Newbold-on-Stour, CV37 8UB

Events open to all groups:



Low Carbon Agriculture Show

Date: 6th March

Venue: Stoneleigh Park

We will be going to the show this year and would love you to join us for tea or coffee at 11am. We will be able to sign post you to interesting stalls and help make the most out of the show. Register for free: www.lowcarbonagricultureshow.co.uk



Pollinator populations in Warwickshire with Steven Falk

Date: 20th March

Time: 7pm

Venue: Marton village hall

Steven will be giving a talk on the pollinator populations of Warwickshire with an insight into the findings of a project he worked on with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology: 'Landscape-scale species monitoring of agri-environment schemes'. He will also cover hedgerow management for pollinators. Steven is always a fantastic speaker so do make sure you pop this one in the diary.



Agroforestry day trip

Date: 21st May

Time: 10.30am

Venue: Eastbrook Farm, Bishopstone, Nr Swindon

This is a visit led by Ben Raskin focusing on the agroforestry systems in place on Helen Browning's organic farm. This may be a little further than our usual visits but it's an amazing opportunity to hear from one of the country's leading agroforestry specialists on the farm that he helps manage. Lunch will be included.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Integrated Pest Management plan

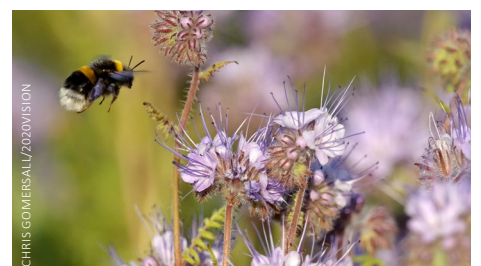
The IPM tool was produced by crop protection and IPM specialists at ADAS and SRUC. It is really useful for creating an integrated pest management plan for your farm: ipmtool.net

Agricultural Advice Hub

The Catchment Based Approach team have been working with Severn Rivers Trust to set up an Agricultural Advice Hub which has just been launched. It provides a platform where farmers can go to find all of the advice and projects available to them in their local area. It will continue to be updated as advisors and funders populate the maps themselves. Take a look at the site here: <https://aghub.catchmentbasedapproach.org/pages/connections>

UK Farmer Group Discussion Network

We mentioned this in previous newsletters, it is a network of 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. 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. [Follow this link](http://www.farmergroupdiscussion.org/join) for an example of their newsletter. To join the Network, go to www.farmergroupdiscussion.org/join.





Help, advice and monitoring

Advice on Natural Flood Management and Nature Based Solutions

Imogen still has a couple of slots left for farm visits to look at potential for Natural Flood Management and wider Nature Based Solutions in the Leam catchment. If you are interested in options such as pond/scrape/wetland creation or restoration, floodplain and river reconnection, cross-slope hedgerows, buffer strips, or leaky woody dams, then feel free to get in touch. We are also open for interested recipients of our Severn Woodlands grant scheme for winter of 24/25. Payments of £5,000 per hectare are available to create areas of native broadleaf woodland, with all tree planting materials and planting contractors covered by Severn Rivers Ecology. Please email imogen.rutter@severnriverstrust.com for further info.

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@wkw.org.uk call her on 07495 457132 or speak to her at the next event.

West Midlands Ringing Group

West Midlands Ringing Group are licensed bird ringers who can monitor birds across your land and create baseline data for landowners and farmers. They use thermal imaging surveys and ring birds to help draw up a survey report for your land. As well as surveying, they are able to advise on ideas for your quiet, unused corners, which could benefit wildlife with a few small changes.
Contact: wrmrg@gmail.com

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 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

We now only list the most recent funding opportunities but lots more can be found on a dedicated page on the Rural Hub Website: [Funding opportunities - Warwickshire Rural Hub](#)

■ Funding for Natural Flood Management near Kenilworth

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is working with landowners and farmers around the Kenilworth area to construct Natural Flood Management measures and enhance biodiversity, restoring hedgerows, creating wet scrapes and pools, and using woody debris in carefully assessed locations to help slow flood water in the brooks and ditches. We currently have funding support from Environment Agency and from Kenilworth Town Council's Community Infrastructure Levy. We would be interested in hearing from further landowners and farmers in the area who would be keen to help with this. If interested, please contact Tim Precious-Li: tim.precious@wkw.org.uk; m: 07464 486277.

■ Local Nature Recovery Strategy

It is planned to have an engagement survey to gather people's thoughts and ideas. This

will include questions on landscape scale work and species that need action to enable them to recover. Questions are being finalised currently, hopefully to release during March. There will be discussions involving landowners and farmers to help to shape the priorities for the strategy. More information will be circulated as soon as possible, via the Farming Groups and Rural Hub. Any queries can be sent to wcslnp@wkw.org.uk. Information on the LNRS guidance can be found at: <https://wcslnp.wixsite.com/localnature/lnrs>.

■ CS capital grant for hedges

So many hedges in our county are desperate for care and attention. Good hedges, along with the tussocky grass at their base can make a huge difference to the wildlife on your farms as well as providing habitat for beneficial insects and shelter for livestock.

There are some good grants available for restoring your hedges under the CS capital grant scheme gapping up £17.22 per m, Hedgelaying (with staking and binding) £19.34 and fencing available to protect your restored hedges. Applications are easy to apply for and you can claim as soon as you have completed the work. Find out more here: [Capital Grants 2023: Countryside Stewardship](#). Please ask if you need any help with applications.

■ SFI Sustainable Farming Incentive [SFI Handbook for the SFI 2023 offer](#).

This link is for the current offer but please be aware of the options that are coming in later this year – [Environmental land management in 2024: details of actions and payments](#). This doesn't stop you applying now as you can have multiple SFI agreements or add extra actions in on your year anniversary.