



Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Groups Newsletter Autumn 2025

After a rather challenging year let's hope that this autumn is kind and everyone's crops get off to a good start. If you are struggling, there are lots of organisations who can give help and support; The Farming Community Network, RABI and Addington Fund (see website links at the end of the newsletter). Remember we always finish our meetings with a cuppa and a chance to catch up with other farmers which makes it an even better reason to get away from the farm for a couple of hours.

See you all soon.
Jane, Zoe, Kirsty, Imogen, Sally, Izaak and Libby

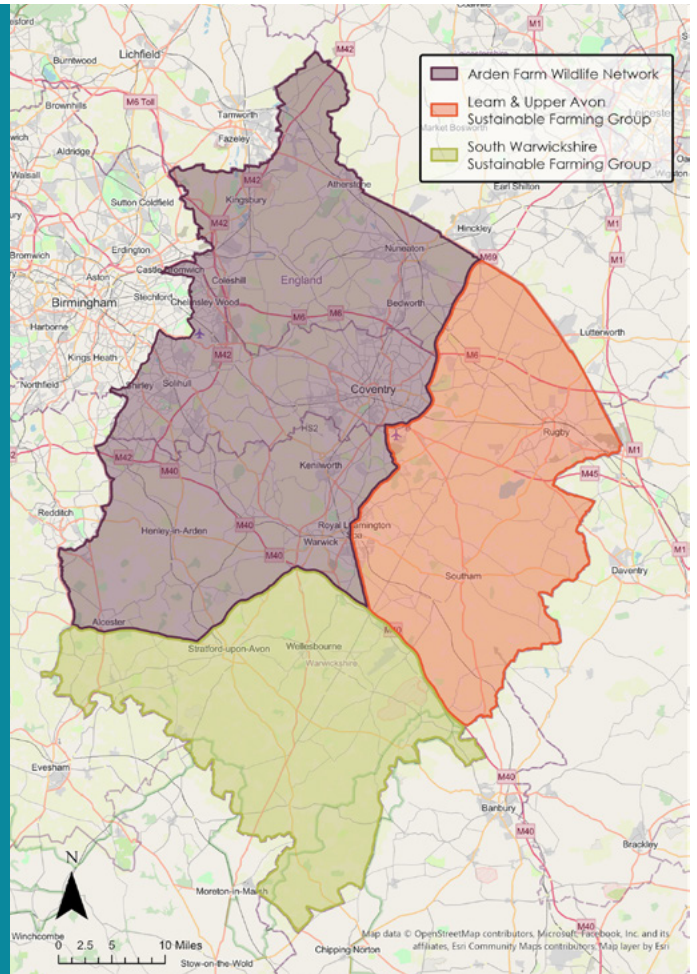
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Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

It was great to see some of you at the recent LNRS roadshow and thank you all for your feedback, this is being collated and fed back into the public consultation. The link to presentation we used for the events and the most common Q and As can be found [here](#).

For those of you who didn't attend the events I would suggest that you have a look at the [website](#). The mapping tool is also good to be able to focus your mind on what environmental improvement measures could make the most difference to nature restoration and therefore a good place to start on your farm. The public

consultation is open until 2nd November so please do feed back through this if you have any concerns or queries.

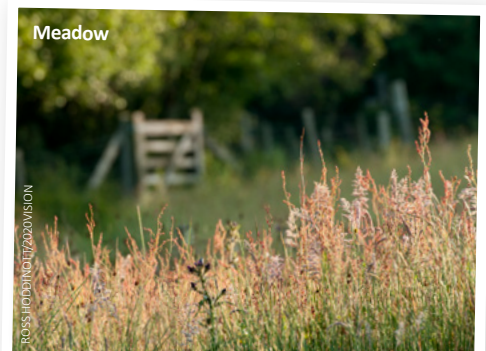
Free Trees

Thank you for all your orders, we've had a huge amount of interest again this year. We are now in the process of getting quotes from nurseries then we will let you know collection information asap.

Making Magical Meadows

Although we don't have any funding to restore meadows this year, we have been busy setting up our new Warwickshire Meadows Hub. The aim of this is to bring together everyone who is interested in

meadows including contractors, ecologists and meadow owners so we can link you with the information you need to ensure you manage or restore your meadows in the best way possible. If you would like to be added to the Meadows Hub mailing list please email land.advice@wkw.org.uk.





Kestrel



Visit to FarmED

Big Farmland Bird Count

This seems far away now but as we won't have another newsletter until just before we wanted to tell you about what will be happening next year. We really would like to get more information about farmland birds in Warwickshire so if you do take part in this then please do email us the results that you submit to GWCT so we can start building up a picture locally. We have some kestrel boxes up for grabs this year so the first 8 farmers to send in their results will receive a kestrel box. If you would like help completing the BFBC then please do get in touch with land.advice@wkw.org.uk and one of the WWT team will be able to come out and help you.

Joint Events (all group members welcome):

Recent Events:

■ FarmED visit

A large group enjoyed a guided walk round their demonstration farm with co-founder Ian Wilkinson. We started with the wheat control plot, first planted as a field crop in the 1950s, with a small area retained when it became FarmED, which provides an interesting comparable for the other trial plots. There was a lot to see, including: a mixed barley/rye crop grown without glyphosate for whisky; a mixed wheat/rye crop for use in the café's rye bread as an experiment as they normally mix post milling – both had a clover underley which hadn't done so well this year; hemp is being trialled, a seed variety for use in the café, and a fibre variety will be used for building materials; several herbal leys investigating the over yielding effect when mixing multiple species together. The independently run market garden has proved integral to supplying their café and keeps food miles low, it also provides vegetable boxes for the public and has since become a hub for bread and meat

box distribution. We ended with bacon butties all round!

■ Summer Catch Crops with Severn Trent (AFWN and LUASFG)

Marion and Peter from Severn Trent joined us at White Hall Farm to discuss the benefits and management of summer catch crops including some of the findings of their Soil Health Improvement trial. We discussed establishment and destruction techniques as well as the benefits seen by the members of the groups who had been using summer catch crops. These included reduced compaction, increased soil health, better success with direct drilling and increase numbers of wildlife, not just in the following year but for an extended time period. Summer catch crop payments are available from Severn Trent and from SFI.

Upcoming Events: See joint events.

What to expect from an RPA compliance visit

Date: Monday 10th November

Time: 1.30–3.30pm

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

We will be joined by the RPA to discuss their approach to compliance visits. What to expect, how to prepare and what happens if they find something wrong.

Free trees pick up day Dec/Jan Details TBC

Pick up your free trees, get some advice on planting and further woodland grants available and have a cuppa.

Update from Arden Farm Wildlife Network

Recent Events:

■ Meadows Farm Walk

In June we spent a lovely afternoon in the meadows at Little Rushbrook Farm, Tamworth in Arden. Tony and Sue showed us round their lovely meadows and we discussed; Species rich grassland management and restoration techniques, the SFI species rich grassland assessment method and did a bit of practice species identification. Our friends in Herefordshire have got a great [website](#) with lots of resources which is a great place to start if you need further information.



Meadow brown butterfly

JON HAWKINS/SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY



Upcoming Events: See joint events.

Visit to the Filongley Flood project in December

Details TBC

Hear our specialist speaker give advice on how to increase infiltration rates in arable and grassland.

Update from Leam and Upper Avon Sustainable Farming Group

Recent Events:

■ **Hedges and edges**

It's hard to remember that we were once in the middle of a heatwave now, but if you cast your minds back to our summer farm walk, we had a great evening at Hodnell Manor, hosted by Rebecca Sunang-Joret. We talked about different types of edge strips, including floristic margins, and how to establish these. We also heard about hedgerow management from Izaak, and research using moth traps on arable margins from Caroline, a PhD student at the University of Birmingham. We rounded off the evening with a bit of a mezze looking out over the lake!

■ **Small Mammals, a joint event with Rural Hub in October**

Hosted at Village Farm by Miranda and Ulli, Nick from Warwickshire Wildlife Trust took visitors around the farm looking at traps that he had set for small mammals. Bank vole and common shrew were trapped, and Nick explained how to identify and differentiate different types of vole, shrew and mouse before heading back to the barn for pizzas. Thank you to Jane from Rural Hub for putting on this event!

Upcoming Events: See joint events.

Building On-Farm Climate Resilience

Date: Monday 8th December

Time: TBC

Venue: Napton Village Hall
Joe Stanley from the Allerton Project will be joining us to discuss how to approach climate change impacts on farm and build resilience into your farming system.

Update from South Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Group

Recent Events:

■ **Soil Chemistry with Steve Townsend**

Following our visit from Steve Townsend (Soil First Farming) back in February where we discussed farming without glyphosate, Steve joined us again this month to explore all things soil chemistry. He shared lots of insight into the key soil nutrients (magnesium, calcium, sodium and potassium) and how they interact with each other and other soil components. The talk raised some great conversation around soil pH, organic matter, and the best tests to do to understand your soil, and was followed by an in-field look at soil structure and consistency to discuss what we had learned.



IMOGEN RUTTER

ION-HAWKINS/SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

Upcoming events: See joint events.

Hedgerow management for birds and pollinators

December. Details TBC

Natural Flood Management Early 2026, details TBC

Remember the Warwickshire Rural Hub also host lots of different events so have a look on their [website](#).

Help, advice and monitoring

■ Advice on Natural Flood Management and Nature Based Solutions

Imogen is providing ongoing farm visits to look at potential for Natural Flood Management and wider Nature Based Solutions in the Leam catchment, with funding confirmed again for 25/26. 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. A free report is provided afterwards.

■ Farm and Wildlife Advice Service

WWT's Farm and Wildlife Advice Service is available to discuss your funding options including help to prepare for new agri-environment schemes next year. We can also help with habitat management advice or surveys. Please get in touch at land.advice@wkw.org.uk or 07495 457132 to discuss how we can help you.

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](#).

■ Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier

You may have recently seen that this scheme is now open for applicants, see details [here](#). Although this is the case, you still need to be invited to apply. There are some very lucrative management payments available if you are looking to more for the environment. If you would like to discuss the opportunities for Higher Tier on your farm or would like help navigating the application process, please get in touch with land.advice@wkw.org.uk.

■ Severn Trent Environmental Protection Scheme (STEPS)

STEPS is reopening again this year with some similar options available including wildflower margins, cover crops and catch crops, and some newer options such as enhanced 3D buffer strips. Get in touch with your local advisor to find out more.

Leam and Upper Avon catchment – Peter Bowman 07711 169635

Leam and Upper Avon catchment – Marion Perriot-Peterson 07970 944834

Bourne and Blythe catchment – Una McBride 07811 847161

■ Animal Health and Welfare Grant

The Animal Health and Welfare Grant is still available to apply for from DEFRA. This grant can help fund your vet visit for beef, dairy, pigs and sheep. For more details, see [here](#).



Brown hare



USEFUL RESOURCES

Don't forget we have all the links from our previous newsletters here: [Rural Hub website](#).

■ Support

If you are struggling with financial or mental health worries or just need someone to talk to, there are several charities offering support for farmers. Please do take advantage of these and always know you can speak to any of us as well.

■ [FCN Farming Community Network](#)

■ [RABI – The farmers charity](#)

■ [Addington Fund](#)

■ Local Nature Recovery Strategy Guidance

There is lots of information on this website and links to further reading to help support you with your environmental management aspirations on your farm. This section of the [website](#) will continue to increase so is definitely worth having a look if you want some ideas on how to manage a certain habitat or manage for a certain species.

Starling murmuration

