



# Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Groups

## Newsletter Summer 2026

We sadly had to say a fond farewell to Libby Keysell in March. Many of you met Libby who was the Agricultural Advice Assistant for Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and had been with the team since July 2024. She rapidly expanded her knowledge and confidence, and we valued the calm capability that she brought to our team dynamic. She has moved to pursue a career in horticulture with the National Trust so hopefully we'll cross paths with her in the future.

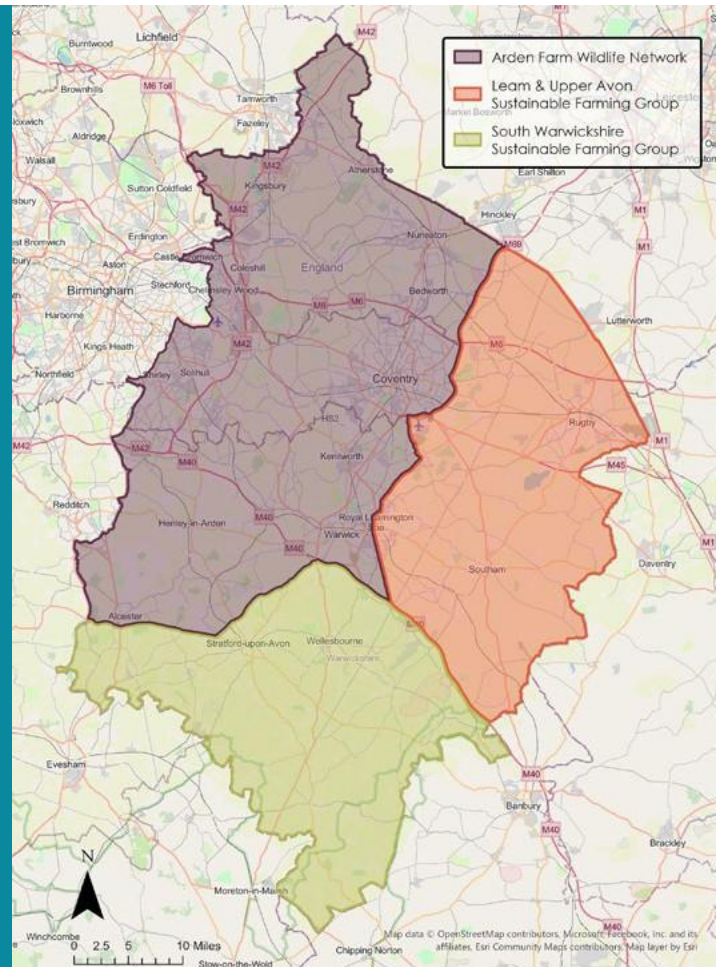
We will also be losing Imogen from our team in early July, she's been a wonderful addition over the last couple of years bringing a wealth of knowledge around natural flood management and freshwater habitats. She will be heading off to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust to continue her great work. There will therefore be a bit of a transition time for the Leam and Upper Avon group while we find the right facilitator for the group. Please be assured we will continue to run events and ensure as seamless a transition as possible.

The big message from this newsletter is that agri-environment schemes are opening again this year so please make sure you are prepared well in advance. The application windows will only stay open as long as there is still budget available so you will probably need to get in quick.

We are always trying to introduce you to funding streams and projects to help support what you are doing on your farms for the environment. If you want to investigate any of these then please do let your facilitators know.

In addition, we are still searching for some long-term funding for the groups and our hope is to be a part of the new collaboration fund opening at the end of the year so watch this space!

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



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## Free Trees

Ordering for this year's free trees is now open using this form <https://forms.gle/KFombHqJS2WixC5b8>. Please note that we need location details of tree planting before you submit the form this year. The window for ordering closes on Sunday 19th July.

Unfortunately, Stratford District Council is unable to confirm funding until early July, so we have taken the decision to advertise as normal for Rugby, Warwick and Solihull districts and open ordering for Stratford District when funding has been confirmed. We appreciate that this will be prime harvesting time for a lot of you so we will keep the order form open for a longer window to make sure you have the opportunity to submit your orders.

All orders will need to be collected from a central pick-up point in each district/borough. The dates and locations for these will be arranged for December/January.

## River Arrow and Alne Enhancement Partnership

This new partnership aims to work with land managers across both river catchments to deliver river and floodplain restoration, habitat creation, improved water quality, and natural flood management. The group also coordinates efforts to attract funding including capital funds for floodplain habitat improvements, riparian buffers, and in-channel enhancements, natural flood management (including ponds) upstream of Alcester and in-field options such as soil structure improvements. For large-scale projects with significant impact there may be multi-year maintenance payments

available. Woodland creation is also supported, with delivery and maintenance payments of £5,000 per hectare.

Those interested in getting involved are encouraged to share their ideas and ambitions and arrange a site visit. For further information or to discuss opportunities contact Tim Burridge (Severn Rivers Trust): [tim.burridge@severnriverstrust.com](mailto:tim.burridge@severnriverstrust.com) or Jake McAlister (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust): [jake.mcalister@wkwtrg.org.uk](mailto:jake.mcalister@wkwtrg.org.uk)

## Joint Events (all group members welcome):

### Recent Events:

#### ■ What is Exchange Market and can it work for me?

[Exchange Market](#) (EM) hosted a webinar in early March to talk through this new funding opportunity for arable farmers who want to try practical changes that reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions, such as improving nitrogen efficiency. Not to be confused with selling carbon credits, actions are flexible with you choosing the ones you want to make and creating a bespoke plan. EM advisers support you through the process and payments are at a fixed rate of £60 per tonne of carbon equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) reduced annually. Agreements are 12 months long, with an option to renew, and are designed to de-risk trialling new ideas for reducing your emissions.

*There have been a series of hurdles in getting the webinar recording to you but hopefully we will soon have it available.*

#### ■ Joe Stanley at Hodnell Manor – Climate Resilience

We were joined in April by the excellent speaker Joe Stanley, ARaGS from the Allerton Project to discuss building resilience to climate change into farm businesses. A challenging but important focus in the current farming landscape. Topics included building soil organic matter to improve water holding capacity, field drainage trials, and the use of legume fallows in crop rotations.

One of the interesting facts to come out of the day was that wet, compacted soils can release nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas around 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide. We were kindly hosted by Rebecca Sunang-Joret for this visit and what a fantastic farm it is!

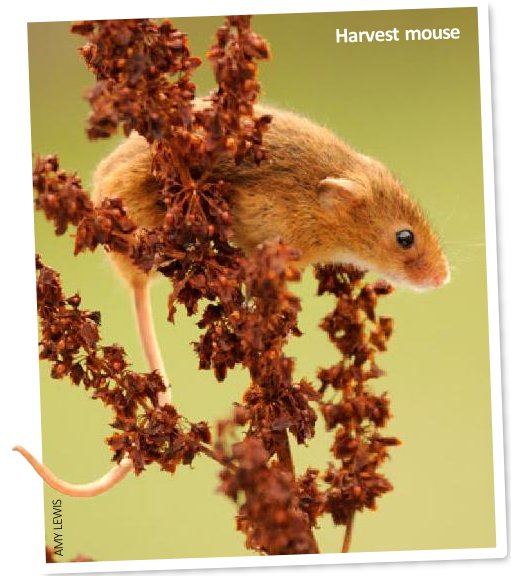
## Update from Arden Farm Wildlife Network

### Recent Events:

#### ■ Arrow and Alne River Enhancement Partnership Launch

One of the key priorities identified by the West AFWN subgroup was river improvements and pond restoration. This meeting visited some of the natural flood management features that Heart of England Forest have created and was followed by a pie and pint in the pub to discuss potential enhancement areas on all the members' farms. The partnership is made up of Severn Rivers Trust, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Heart of England.





### ■ Making the Most of Hedgerows Farm Walk

Izaak (assistant agricultural adviser from the Wildlife Trust) led this farm walk and highlighted how important hedges are for connecting habitats and how to improve them for pollinators, small mammals and birds. Gate Farm was a great host as they had a range of hedges at different stages in the life cycle which provided perfect examples.

Following this meeting, Izaak will be drawing up plans for the Central AFWN subgroup which will help with prioritising hedge restoration and hedge tree planting for improving habitat connectivity, extending the blossom sequence and creating more diverse hedgerow structure.

### ■ Summer Farm Walk

The whole AFWN group came together to discuss progress so far with our projects. The farm walk was kindly hosted by Chris and Sophie at Oversley Hill Farm where we saw their hedge laying, scrape creation, blackthorn management for brown hairstreak butterfly and some orchids coming through in a corner of one of their fields. It was a great opportunity to catch up with everyone and discuss ideas for future projects.

### Update from Leam and Upper Avon Sustainable Farming Group

#### Recent Events:

■ In February we had an excellent talk from Steve Townsend on 'Is regenerative farming really an answer to Warwickshire clay?' Steve talked us through the difficulties of farming on clay and ways to reduce tillage and utilise cover crops on this soil. He also talked about using soil management to tackle black grass and store more carbon. We hope to bring Steven back to talk more

on soil chemistry and understanding your soil test results.

■ In March we were joined by Antony Pearce of Dudley Peverill Associates who talked to the group about farm diversification and gave some starting points for those considering it. His team now works nationwide after starting from a small consultancy and guides landowners through the process of business plans, financing & funding, grant availability and tax implications. Antony can provide a consultancy service all the way through from concept to completion so please get in touch if you'd like any further info on these services.

**Upcoming Events:** See also joint events.



#### Farm walk at Bragborough Hall

Join us for a lovely midsummer farm walk as we walk and talk through the family's journey of diversifying the farm, including changes to the cropping rotation, establishing herbal leys, growing low-input spring cereals, creating a hay meadow through arable reversion, and improving drainage. We'll also discuss wider business diversification, including how the family has developed office space and a dog paddock. This rescheduled talk from May will now take place at the end of June or early July – watch this space and keep an eye on the WhatsApp group!

### Update from South Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Group

#### Recent Events:

■ **Building your on-farm flood resilience** in March had to be postponed due to good weather reducing attendant numbers! Shipston Area Flood Action Group and I are

looking at how best we redo this event.

■ Our **Summer farm walk** took place on Ditchford Farm, kindly hosted by Lord Willoughby de Broke and his Farm Manager, Lewis Hall. We enjoyed a lovely evening walk to see some fabulous wildflower margins, field corners and legume fallows and it is clear that they have worked hard to bring wildlife back to the farm. We also got first-hand insight into the pluses and minuses of small-scale BNG. It was a great opportunity for the group to catch up as we've had a quiet year and we all enjoyed pork pies washed down with Ditchford Farm beer in the beautiful setting of the farm lake. Sally provided a quick update on the SFI and Capital Grant opportunities this year. The information is available to see [here](#).

**Upcoming events:** See also joint events.



#### Managing Margins for Maximum Effect

**Date:** Thursday 16th July

**Time:** 6–8pm

**Venue:** Tithe Farm, Alderminster, CV37 8NX  
A farm walk to discuss how to get the best from margins for your farm, for SFI and for wildlife.



#### Making the most of Hedgerows farm walk

**Date:** September, time and venue TBC.

Following up on hedgerow management after our interesting talk back in December.



#### SWAN and farming

**Date:** Tuesday 10th November

**Time:** 5.30pm–7.30pm

**Venue:** University of Warwick Innovation Campus, Wellesbourne, CV35 9EF  
A talk by Rosemary Collier on the South Warwickshire Action Network for Wildlife (SWAN) about their work, particularly with farmland birds and linking with farmers.



## Visit to the startling murmuration on a SWSFG

### member's farm

Subject to the starlings' return. By the nature of this one, the date and time will be arranged reasonably last minute and information shared via email and the WhatsApp group.

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

Severn Rivers Trust are 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 26/27. 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.

### ■ Catchment Sensitive Farming

Chris Morgan is the new Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer for the Warwickshire Avon (this includes any tributary that flows into the Avon, even if not in the county of Warwickshire). He has asked for farmers and land agents to get in touch with him via the following link. Please [download the form](#) and send back to [csf.severn@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:csf.severn@naturalengland.org.uk).

Mic Orchard is still working in the Tame, Anker, Mease Catchment and can be contacted through the same form above.

### ■ Farm and Wildlife Advice Service

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's Farm and Wildlife Advice Service offers free first advisory visits to all members of the sustainable farming groups both new and old. We can help with habitat management, wildlife and habitat surveys and accessing funding. Please email [land.advice@wkwat.org.uk](mailto:land.advice@wkwat.org.uk) or call Sally on 07495 457132 to book your visit.

## 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 [Rural Hub Website](#).

For a quick update on the SFI 2026 offer and the Capital Grants 2026 offer see [here](#).

### ■ CS Capital Grant

The next application window is due to open in July. If you are thinking of applying there are lots of things that you may need to do to prepare before the application window opens. It is likely that the budget will go quickly so you will need to apply shortly after the window opens to get a chance. Final details about the scheme have now been released [here](#).

### ■ SFI

The first round is due to open on 30th June and will be available to small farmers (less than 50 ha) and those that do not have an existing government environmental scheme e.g. CS Mid-tier, Higher Tier or SFI. The guidance for 2026 is [here](#).

### ■ Severn Woodlands scheme through Severn Rivers Trust

SRT are offering an ongoing woodland creation grant for the planting of native, broadleaf woodland at a payment of £5000 per ha, spread across two payments. All capital costs, woodland design and paperwork is covered by SRT. Ideally, we are looking for schemes of over 1 hectare for planting during winter 2026/27. Smaller may be possible if no additional capital works are needed e.g.. fencing. We are particularly interested in riparian buffer strip planting or connecting up existing woodland corridors, so get in touch if this is something that interests you. Please get in touch with Imogen if you are interested to arrange a site visit.

### ■ Environmental Farmers Group (EFG)

EFG is a cooperative group of farmers delivering positive environmental change at a landscape-scale, funded through natural capital trading (private finance). They are supported by some of the UK's leading natural capital specialists, act as a trusted navigator for farmers and landowners and

ensure fair financial reward for Members. EFG's mission is to harness scale and member cooperation to secure the best environmental results and financial returns for a wide range of natural capital goods and services. EFG's desired outcomes are:

- Biodiversity and species recovery
- Clean water
- Net Zero farming by 2040

The Central England group was set up in 2024 by Johnny Wake of Courteenhall and now has Zoe Bell as its local lead. If you are interested in finding out more about EFG and how they can help with BNG or soil carbon projects contact Zoe Bell on **07980 771872** or email [zbelle@gwct.org.uk](mailto:zbelle@gwct.org.uk)



## USEFUL RESOURCES

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

### ■ UKCEH Free Farm Health Check

The UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology is offering farmers a FREE and confidential Farm Health Check. This covers natural capital assessments, environmental opportunity mapping and farm operation impacts. Find out more information and sign up [here](#).

### ■ Defra webinars

DEFRA will be holding webinars on upcoming schemes and consultations including the SFI 2026 and Capital Grants schemes. This gives you the opportunity to see what's available and ask any questions you may have. Dates for future are yet to be announced but you can check their available webinars and catch up with old ones [here](#).

