

T-2019

Developing resource for farm enterprise – Brecon Beacons & Monmouthshire

Project objective: expanding sustainable production of food in the region for local markets.

Quarter 4 report – 15 June to 14 Sep 2021

The primary focus of the project in the fourth quarter has been the development of the stakeholder networks initiated in Q3: of regenerative farmers (the Regenerative Alliance) and the wider food & farming community, policy makers & sector leaders (the 1200 group). The networks have begun to discuss and agree areas of focus and priority actions

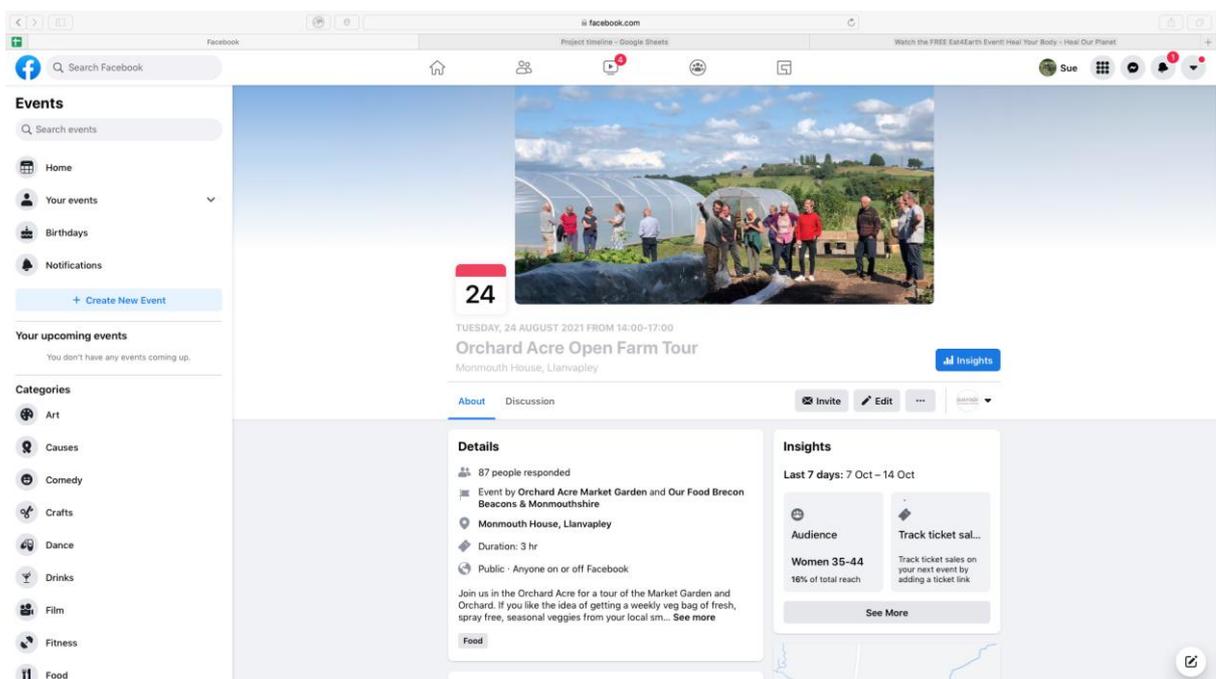
This report is set out according to the six core activities of the project.

1. Promotion of high-productivity, small-scale farming methods & peer network

RDP programme indicator LD-CL.006 Number of promotional/marketing activities raising awareness of LDS: 2

RDP programme Indicator LD-CL 001 – number of feasibility studies: 1

We promoted open days for 4 local regenerative farms – Orchard Acre, Langtons Farm, Tir Awen and Moor Park. Over 100 local residents attended the events to learn about regenerative farming and over half expressed interest in becoming new veg box customers.



The busy summer growing season for the farmers has meant that the Regenerative Alliance terms of reference previously envisaged for the quarter are not yet finalised. We will work on these with the farmers during the quieter winter months.

A market study was commissioned, (with Welsh Government/Heritage Lottery funding) to identify regional market opportunities in farming and growing for 2022 and beyond. Farming Connect has offered to use data from this study as part of sessions for farmers in the autumn. The study, by Promar International, has been shared with partners.

We have promoted the project's aspirations via articles in the Abergavenny Food Festival Magazine (PDF attached with this report) and [Climate Cymru](#) (acknowledging support of funders).

We continued to supplement the knowledge resource with new stories showcasing regenerative farming for publication on www.our-food.org.

2. Create land service and find further land

RDP programme Indicator LD-CL 001 – number of feasibility studies: 1

A vision document was drafted and discussed by the 1200 group, setting out the aspirations of the initiative. The 1200 group also progressed the suggestion of forming a Land Trust to acquire and manage land for new, regenerative farming. Advice was sought from members with relevant experience and from the Wales Cooperative Centre, which provides support to communities wishing to set up such entities. We have concluded that the optimum legal structure is a Community Benefit Society. A draft constitution has been prepared and details will be finalised during the coming weeks.

The proposed approach in seeking land for regenerative agriculture has been communicated to policy makers in the region and both Monmouthshire County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority are represented on the group.

3. Develop Regional Stakeholder network

Fourth quarter activities have entailed primarily working with groups i. and iii. below

Network membership groupings:

- i. a small peer group of practising regenerative farmers & growers (*sections 1 & 4*)
- ii. a wider group of would-be growers and interested supporters from the community
- iii. a group of policy makers and sector leaders (the originally-envisaged advisory board). (*see sections 3 & 6*).

Our Food has worked to dovetail the “1200 group” work with the “Farming & Growing task force” within the Monmouthshire Sustainable Food Place initiative, bringing perspectives from the 1200 group into the SFP to provide continuity beyond the lifetime of this project.

For the wider group of stakeholders, we hosted a screening of the film, “This Good Earth” underlining the need for regenerative farming in the UK and across the world.

4. Recruit regenerative farming entrepreneurs (via network activity & land availability)

Prompted by the engagement with Oxford Brookes University, Our Food has been contacted by Portsmouth University, requesting student placements for their agriculture courses on the regenerative farms of the network from 2022.

As prospective new farmers (5 so far) have heard about Our Food and come forward, we have introduced them to existing farmers and sign-posted them to support mechanisms for new entrants.

With funding from the Heritage Lottery, we engaged the professional agency, Blue Stag, to develop a communications strategy to reach a range of different stakeholder audiences at the appropriate time (beyond the lifetime of this funded project). The outline strategy has been shared with the 1200 group.

5. Scope financial options for farming enterprise set up

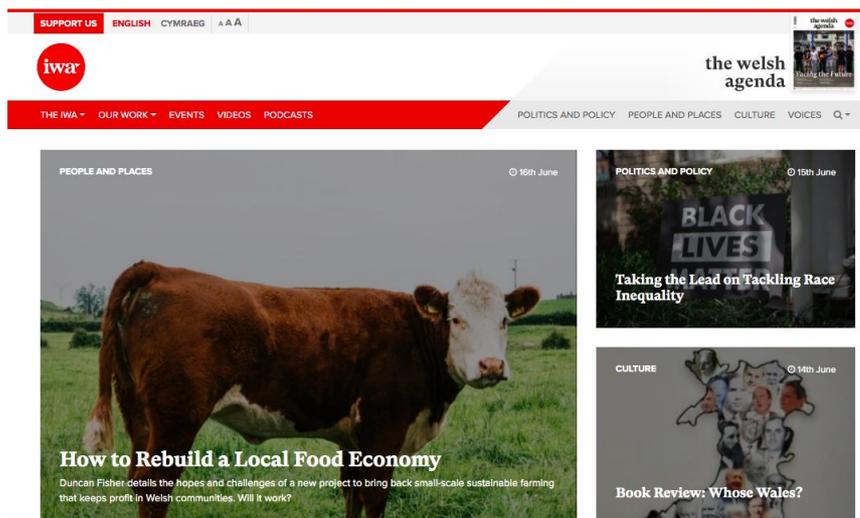
RDP programme Indicator LD-CL 001 – number of feasibility studies: 1

Geldards, Cardiff-based charity lawyers, have drawn up the documentation that will enable a start-up fund to be established within the Community Foundation Wales, and disbursed through the new Land Trust. The next step is to commission fundraising for this fund and we are currently waiting to hear whether we have secured resources to do this.

In the meantime, we met with a new farmer seeking business development funding to understand more about needs of potential beneficiaries of the new service. (It was disappointing not to be in a position to help immediately)! We also held an initial meeting with the Roddick Foundation, members of Farming the Future, a fund created to support regenerative farming. We hope to be invited to engage further with them in future.

6. Influencing local and national policy to support this approach

As part of our efforts to communicate the approach of the project to regional and national policy makers, we had our article about the 1200 acres concept and the wider initiative published by the [Institute of Welsh Affairs](#) (15 June). This resulted in a meeting with the Welsh Government head of farming and his team.



We wrote to the Minister for Agriculture, Lesley Griffiths, who expressed interest in visiting the region to see regenerative farming in practice. We hope to arrange this in the near future.