

PENDLE HILL FARMERS GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR FOUR 2021-2022

The Pendle Hill Farmers Group was set up in March 2018, following a successful application to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund. The agreement was extended at the end of March 2021 to cover one final year to the end of March 2022 and a revised Facilitation Plan was put into place. This was possible due to the budget underspend in yr3 because of the Covid-19 restrictions on meetings.

Group objectives

The group objectives for the year were to concentrate delivery on the following objectives:

1. practical training and knowledge development on carbon storage in soils, woodland and trees/hedges. Carbon calculation and soil carbon monitoring, linking into the management and restoration of species rich grasslands, restoration and maintenance of hedgerows and management and creation of joined up woodlands.
2. the management and restoration of upland heath, upland and lowland hay meadows, the management of ancient woodlands and the creation of native woodlands.
3. management of grassland for the benefit of breeding wader assemblages, in particular management for curlew, lapwing and snipe. We will also work with the new RSPB Curlew Green Recovery Challenge Fund project to deliver new capital works where most appropriate on members landholdings to improve habitats for wading birds eg scrapes
4. continuing improvements in water quality where sediment, foecal matter and pesticides are an issue into the Calder and Ribble through diffuse pollution
5. ongoing training and advocacy about 'Natural Flood Management' techniques which can reduce surface run off and soil erosion and slow the speed of water through the catchment following high rainfall events
6. getting members 'ELM ready', understanding the language of public goods and how to deliver effectively within the new schemes

Programme of events

The following is the diary of events which were undertaken during the year, together with the attendance figures and the objectives against which each event was delivering. One event during the year was cancelled due to a lack of members wishing to attend. That event was a practical session with The Farm Carbon Toolkit during which members were invited to bring their farm carbon data and laptops to run through inputting it to the Toolkit. One farm was interested, but the rest felt that the amount of data needed was too onerous.

We had a packed programme and tried wherever possible to run farm visits rather than meetings, as these tend to be better attended, and were more in line with Covid regulations at the time.

In addition to the events, we ran two additional projects – one looking at faecal egg counts through dung sampling which six members took part in and the other collecting soil carbon storage data through soil sampling and analysis which eight members took part in.

Date	Event	Location	Attendees	Objective
Wednesday 21 st April 2021	Farm wader walk with RSPB to look at integrating habitat management into pastures and forage ground	Cockshotts Farm, Sabden	5	2, 3, 6
Wednesday 9 th June 2021	Launch meeting of the Farmer Network extension year – what we have got planned and how to get involved	Hollins Dairy, Downham	12	all
Thursday 8 th July 2021	Launch meeting for the Integrated Parasite Management project with Rob Howe from Lambert Leonard & May Vets	Cockshotts Farm, Sabden	5	3, 4, 6
Wednesday 28 th July 2021	Demonstration visit to look at techniques for meadow restoration with Sarah Robinson and Peter Blackwell	Bell Sykes, Slaidburn	10	2, 6
Tuesday 21 st Sept 2021	Farm visit to look at woodland planting support schemes with Kristina Graves from Ribble Rivers Trust	Wymondhouses, Pendleton	9	1, 2, 5, 6
Monday 27 th Sept 2021	Visit to Croasdale Farm to look at the Belted Galloway herd and talk about the pasture restoration work and educational access work with Malcolm Handley	Croasdale Farm, Slaidburn	7	2, 6
Wednesday 13 th October 2021	Training activity with Annie Landless about measuring soil carbon and the soil health monitoring App 'Soil Mentor'	Little Mearley Hall Farm, Worston	7	1, 6
Wed 3 rd Nov 2021	Rush management workshop with Ian Cairns	Dean Farm, Sabden	11	2, 3, 4, 6
Wed 15 th Dec 2021	Winter meeting with guest speaker Adam Briggs NFU	The Swan with Two Necks	13	6
Wednesday 19 th Jan 2022	Walk and talk at Gazegill Farm, Rimington about FIPL funding and projects	Gazegill Farm, Rimington	7	2, 6
Wed 23 rd Feb 2022	Talk on soil health, bringing together the work done on carbon and pesticide use with James Bretherton	Barley VH	14	1, 4, 6
Wed 16 th March 2022	Final meeting, discussion on next steps, with NFU NW Regional Director David Hall speaking on the Agricultural Transition Plan	White Bull Gisburn	18	6



RSPB Wader management day



Visit to
Croasdale

Rush management day looking over the quad weed wiper



Counting worms with Annie Landless



Countryside Stewardship

This year saw a significant increase in the numbers of members applying for the mid-tier of Countryside Stewardship, in line with elsewhere in the country, with eight endorsements from myself as facilitator.

Participation and delivery in partnership

One of the advantages of being a farmer member of the Pendle Hill Farmers Network was always the links with the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership. This four year HF funded programme in and around Pendle Hill includes several projects which have been of great interest to the farming community. The projects and activity linked to the group is shown in the table below:

PHLP Project	Activity related to PHFN
Traditional Boundary project – help, advice, funding and training for the upkeep and restoration of priority traditional boundaries within the area (over and above those funded via CS)	Thirteen farmer members benefitted from this project, with 2010m of hedging and 1006 m of walling restored. This PHLP project was offered exclusively to members of the PHFN.
Pendle WINNS – a woodland creation and management project in cloughs and gullies, also tackling areas of non-native species – Himalayan balsam in particular.	Eleven farmer members have benefitted from woodland management and woodland creation advice, guidance and funding, resulting in 6 ha of woodland management and 12 ha of new woodland being planted.
EA Padiham Flood Management scheme – this scheme of hard engineering around the Padiham settlement has been set up with the opportunity to bid for funds to delivery Biodiversity Gain. We are working with group members wanting to carry out traditional boundary restoration which will help through providing Natural Flood Management.	883m of new hedging planted and double fenced on one members farm who had three fields with run off issues following heavy rainfall.
Wild about Pendle – a series of nature based projects ranging from community wildlife spaces to field scale meadow restoration	The Pendle Meadow Project began in the summer of 2021. Twelve meadows are being restored as part of the scheme, including eight on five members farms. This is another way in which the PHLP can help PHFN member farms start to deliver more public goods.
What is a Hill Worth – this is a research project looking at mapping out the natural capital assets at a farm scale, the ecosystem services which flow from them, and then looking at the	The four farms chosen for this project were all members of the network. These farmers received farm scale information on their natural assets and ecosystem service delivery.

impact of investment in their management on the farm business.	
Graduate traineeships – each year there is one traineeship within the project team, running each year from September.	Two trainees have been involved in the PHFN, providing advice, guidance, photography and mapping for members wanting to enter the CS Boundaries Scheme.

Our extension year has been very productive, with members keen to learn more about their soils, soil carbon, herbal leys and regenerative farming methods such as rotational grazing. There has also been an ongoing appetite for information about the future schemes – both ELM and FiPL, and ways of reducing costs. At the final meeting, the 18 members present filled in a feedback form, the results of which are presented here:

I have enjoyed being a part of the Farmer Network because:	No. agreeing
I have learned new things	14
I have benefitted financially	2
My farming methods have improved	4
I have enjoyed the social aspects	8
I have been put in touch with new contacts	6
The network has been delivered:	
Appropriately with relevant topics	12
At appropriate venues	7
By appropriate speakers	10
Because of the network, I have been able to access:	
Soil Nutrient testing	11
Soil Carbon Testing	10
Dung sampling	5
Wild flower meadow seed	5
Ribble Rivers Trust Woodland Planting	3
Volunteer Help	3
RSPB Wader Management projects	2
Farming in Protected Landscapes funding	8
Countryside Stewardship	5
Traditional Boundaries funding	4

"Excellent group, good information exchange"

"Absolutely 100% positive experience being a member of the network – thankyou Sarah"

"Been really good to get farmers together and help us learn and find new ideas as a group. Helped us move forward with the farm in a more sustainable way and given us good connections"

"Sad for the group to end but happy to have been a part of it – 4 years have flown by!"

"The Farmer Network has been very relevant over the last four years"

"Very enjoyable, learnt about some interesting topics"

"Great! Will be missed!"

"The Network has been very beneficial over the last 4 years, providing advice and details on new schemes/grants available and different methods of doing things. A variety of topics have been covered"

Sarah Robinson

3 May 2022