

Social Farming Support Service Northern Ireland Update June 2017



Update June 2017

Midway through 2017 is an important time to provide an update on the Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland. The service continues to be supported by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and benefits from its position with the charity Rural Support. This update will outline the key developments that have taken place since the start of the year. Progress has been made in promoting Social Farming to the farming and service provider/user communities – this must be built on in order to secure funding for Social Farming initiatives across the region. The service is available for anyone interested in learning more about Social Farming or to start the process of delivering or participating in a Social Farming initiative.

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Continued Support from DAERA for 2017/18

April 2017 marked the continued support of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for the Social Farming Support Service (SFSS). This support for the 2017/18 financial year ensures that the service is staffed on a full-time basis by the Service Coordinator Aoibheann Walsh and that the two key aims of promoting Social Farming and supporting existing and new Social Farming initiatives can continue. The Social Farming Support Service is funded through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework. In addition to providing this funding support, DAERA's support for Social Farming ensures that the concept is recognised at government level. This support from a government department is significant as it ensures that Social Farming can be discussed at cross-departmental level within existing collaborations such as the Regional Day Opportunities Group.

A key target of the 2017/18 financial year is to increase activity on existing and new Social Farming initiatives across Northern Ireland. A regional approach is required to enable opportunities for both individuals who could benefit from participation in Social Farming and farmers who have invested resources to deliver a service on their farm. Developments made during 2017/18 should mean that Social Farming is better placed to operate within a sustainable funding and referral model.

The support of DAERA and the staff within the TRPSI Framework is very much appreciated; it builds on the initial development of the SFSS and the Social Farming Capital Grant Scheme delivered by the department in 2016.

Social Farming – Media Coverage

Social Farming received significant coverage on TV in April 2017, featuring on BBC Home Ground, a rural affairs magazine series celebrating the richness of rural life in Northern Ireland. The episode showcased Social Farming on Annagh Social Farm in Derrylin, Co.Fermanagh. Simon and Jennifer Bullock who a deliver Social Farming service on their farm spoke of their desire to provide opportunities in the rural community for individuals needing support. Matthew and Ben Geddis who have been participating in the Social Farming service on Annagh Social Farm were seen demonstrating in activities on the farm. Within the piece, Aoibeann Walsh the Social Farming Service Coordinator spoke of the need for a sustainable funding and referral model to be developed to supported the continued development of Social Farming to ensure the opportunity is available for those who could benefit from engagement. This coverage was an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of Social Farming to a wide audience.



Social Farming activity on Annagh Social Farm



Aoibeann Walsh outlining the need for funding

Also in April 2017 the hippotherapy service offered on Gortilea Social Farm in Claudy, Co.Derry/Londonderry received coverage on BBC Northern Ireland's Newsline. Clare McMonagle is trained to provide the service which is Occupational Therapy that uses equine movement. Again, this coverage raising the profile of the benefits of providing a service using animals and in a farm environment.

Landscape and Human Health Conference

greencare
3rd International Conference on Landscape and Human Health: Forests, Parks and Green Care
May 17 - 19, 2017, Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Austria

Parallel Session II
Effects of care farms on health and well-being
Thursday, 18th May 2017, 2.20 pm - 4.10 pm
Session Chair: Georg Wiesinger
Room: Festsaal 1

- Janka Horváth (Environmental Social Science Research Group, ESSRG, Hungary)
Bálint Balazs, György Pataki, Hajnalka Petrics
Care Farming in the making – Hungarian experiences
- Nicole Prop (Green Care Austria, Austria)
Green Care Auszeitloft - preventive healthcare at a farm
- Aoibeann Walsh (Rural Support, Northern Ireland)
Social Farming in Northern Ireland: growth and development
- Sarah Hambidge (Bournemouth University, Great Britain)
What does it mean to young people to be part of a care farm: An evaluation of a care farm intervention for young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
- Marjolijn Elings (Wageningen University and Research, Netherlands)
Jan Hoosink
Social farming in the Netherlands

Conference proceedings including Aoibeann Walsh's presentation on Social Farming in Northern Ireland

In May 2017, Aoibeann as Social Farming Service Coordinator for Northern Ireland, had the opportunity to attend the 3rd International Conference on Landscape and Human Health: Forests, Parks and Green Care in Vienna, Austria. As well as benefitting from learning about international practice, the conference offered an opportunity to give an oral presentation on the development of Social Farming in Northern Ireland. Key contacts were established and further international collaboration discussed. The conference concluded with site visits to green care initiatives in the city of Vienna, which demonstrated the key benefits for those who participate.

Balmoral Show 2017

The Balmoral Show in May 2017 was a great opportunity to raise awareness about Social Farming and the Social Farming Support Service (SFSS) within Rural Support. Across the four day show, different individuals and groups involved in Social Farming through delivery or participation spent time on the Rural Support stand explaining the concept to those that stopped for a chat. Thank you to all who shared their experience and to those who visited the stand and expressed their interest in Social Farming.

The focus of Rural Support's stand this year was on the Public Health Agency's '5 ways to wellbeing'. The messages of Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, and Give are relevant to the work of the charity to help farming and rural families deal with challenges and to enjoy rural life. The 5 hands representing the elements of wellbeing were a great talking point for those visiting the stand.



*Social Farmer Eugene Mullan, Armoy;
Aoibheann Walsh, SFSS Coordinator;
Gerry Burns, Rural Support Board member*



Marie, Martin, Paul and Conor from Yellow Road Social Farm, Hilltown with Aoibheann Walsh, SFSS Coordinator

CRANE Project – European funding project on multifunctional agriculture



CRANE Project Logo

Through a collaboration with The Rural Centre based in Clogher, which aims to connect people to collaborate across Europe through EU Projects, Study Visits and Cultural Awareness Training the Social Farming Support Service (SFSS) is engaging with the CRANE project. The aim of the project is to develop training for farmers who want to develop or improve services/activities on their farms by learning from the experience of farmers already providing these services. In June 2017 a project survey was circulated to farmers delivering or with experience of delivering a Social Farming service in Northern Ireland. By participating in the survey and contributing to the project's dataset, the development of Social Farming in Northern Ireland will be reflected at a European level.

The CRANE project partners are based in Northern Ireland, Italy, Spain, and Malta with training to be delivered in Northern Ireland in 2018.

Key Activity – Supporting Social Farming Activity and Development

Progress within 2017 has been focused on supporting existing and new Social Farming initiatives and also promoting the concept of Social Farming within the farming and service user/provider communities. The number of farm/farmers registered as expressing an interest in Social Farming with the Social Farming Support Service (SFSS) is increasing and the number of contacts established within the service user/provider sector is growing. In order to build on this growth, funding is necessary to support engagement in Social Farming initiatives. Work is ongoing to promote the need for this funding, including engaging with the Regional Day Opportunities Cross-Departmental Group.

Please visit the Social Farming section of the Rural Support website: www.ruralsupport.org.uk or follow Rural Support on social media (Twitter: @RuralSupport; Facebook: Rural Support) to keep up to date on developments.

Working in Collaboration – Progress in the Republic of Ireland

Developments continue in the Republic of Ireland based on support provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The national Social Farming Support Office is based in Leitrim and coordinates activity within four regional hubs (Border-Midlands Region; South West Region; West Region; South East Region). Progress is ongoing to establish a national support network for the promotion and delivery of Social Farming in Ireland. Cross-border collaboration has continued and been strengthened in 2017 through the Social Farming Service Coordinator for Northern Ireland being a member of the National Coordination Committee and the Advisory Committee for this work. By working together as the two government supported development agencies for Social on the island of Ireland, there will be combined progress.

Social Farming Training & Development

Work during the 2017/18 financial year will involve providing further training and development opportunities both on or relevant to Social Farming. Those registered on the database within the Social Farming Support Service (SFSS) will receive information on this so if you would be interested in attending future events please contact Aoibeann on the details below.



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