

Social Farming Support Service Northern Ireland Update June 2020



Update June 2020

This bulletin covers the April-June period of 2020, a time which was dominated by restrictions in place due to COVID-19 and when Social Farming delivery was predominantly on pause.

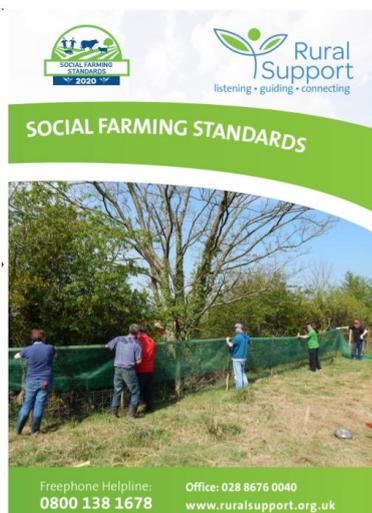
This second newsletter of 2020 will update you how the Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland continued to support farmers and promote Social Farming.

Aoibean Walsh, Social Farming Service Coordinator

Mobile: 07736158983

Email: aoibean@ruralsupport.org.uk

Social Farming Standards



*Social Farming Standards
Overview Document*

Within the April-June period, the farmer group who have experience in delivering Social Farming were supported to register and complete the online application form stage of Social Farming Standards.

The application process involves 3 key stages:

1. Online application
2. Farm inspection visit
3. Panel meeting

The Social Farming Support Service will support farmers applying to the Standards, complete the farm inspection visit following application submission, and present the evidence gathered for each farm to the Panel meetings. The Social Farming Standards Panel is made up of a Rural Support Board member, a Health and Social Care representative, and a Health and Safety Executive NI representative.

The Social Farming Standards will support the next stage of development of Social Farming in Northern Ireland.

Social Farming Impact

"I have never been so happy in a long time. I am tired when I get home but it's a nice tired. I feel like I have contributed something and that feels good"
[Social Farming participant]

"I have found it very personally rewarding. I didn't think when I started that I would have enjoyed being involved as much as I have. It has been good for me"
[Social Farmer]

SoEngage Project



SoEngage project partners meeting virtually in May

The scheduled transnational meeting of the SoEngage project for May 2020 in August changed to a virtual meeting and catch-up. The meeting focused on the remaining project outcomes of pilot testing training materials and dissemination events.

SoEngage is funded through Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership in the field of Vocational Education and Training with the objective to develop training to support farmers to engage in Social Farming for economic benefit and sustainability of the farm and the rural community. Rural Support have promoted the story of Social Farming in Northern Ireland through the project.

Social Farming Discussion Group



Social Farming Discussion Group attendees

The second Discussion Group meeting of experienced Social Farmers took place virtually within June. This meeting forum is an important opportunity for the farmers who provide a service to individuals in need of support to benefit from the collective support of the group.

In particular this meeting focused on the impact of COVID-19 on Social Farming delivery and efforts to restart in the coming weeks.

Social Farming PhD Study



Suzanne Johnston, who is conducting a PhD study into Social Farming in Northern Ireland through Queen's University Belfast with funding support by DAERA, had the opportunity to present an insight into her research as part of an Erasmus+ project conference in June. Suzanne's presentation highlighted the development of Social Farming and the positive impact of participation. Rural Support's Social Farming Support Service are supporting the completion of this PhD study and recognise its importance in future development.

Keeping Positive



While the April-June period seen a stop to Social Farming delivery for the first time in a number of years, the farms remained busy and productive. As part of Rural Support's social media messaging the positive impact made by farmers delivering a Social Farming service was highlighted and recognised.

A range of images and videos from the farms over these months and looking back on good memories have helped to keep positive about Social Farming restarting.

Rural Support's Social Farming Support Service will be supporting farmers as lockdown restrictions ease sufficiently to allow a return to delivery.

Get in Touch

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. You can also contact the Social Farming Service Coordinator on the details below.

Aoibean Walsh, Social Farming Service Coordinator

Mobile: 07736158983

Office: 028 86760040

Email: aoibeann@ruralsupport.org.uk