

Social Farming Support Service Northern Ireland Update December 2020



Update December 2020

This bulletin covers the October-December period of 2020 and as the final update of the year will detail how the Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland continued to support farmers and promote Social Farming in a different and challenging year.

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.

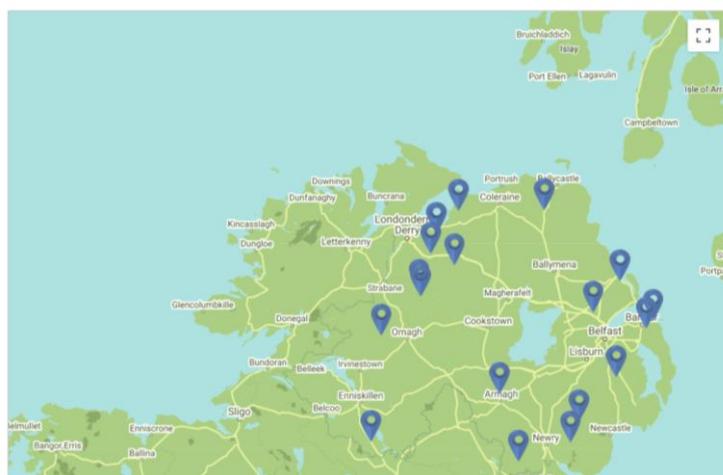
Aoibheann Walsh, Social Farming Service Coordinator

Mobile: 07736158983

Email: aoibeann@ruralsupport.org.uk

Social Farming Delivery

Find A Social Farm



The farmers delivering Social Farming during 2020 were all committed to restarting their service in a safe way and ensuring that participants were updated on the farm during lockdown. A difficult year demonstrated the value of Social Farming for participants and the efforts of the farmer group in their service delivery.

During the October-December period, Social Farming continued on farms across Northern Ireland. Farmers ensured that sessions were delivered in line with COVID-19 restrictions and protection measures.

Within autumn and the start of winter, the daily activities of caring for livestock and ongoing maintenance tasks were structured alongside the annual round-up of the year and planning ahead for 2021. There was also time to mark the upcoming Christmas season with some participants making wreaths with materials from the farm.

Rural Support's Social Farming Support Service will continue to support farmers as they deliver Social Farming in 2021. The Support Service will also engage with farmers who wish to begin service delivery through supporting their training and set-up needs. The key aim for the year ahead will be to promote opportunities on existing and new farms across Northern Ireland for those who could benefit from participation in Social Farming.

Social Farming Standards Launch

Within this reporting period, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Mr Edwin Poots MLA and Minister of Health, Mr Robin Swann MLA jointly launched Rural Support's Social Farming Standards.

Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Mr Poots MLA said: "My Department has supported the development and delivery of Social Farming since 2015. I have heard about the benefits of Social Farming for individuals whose lives have changed for the better and for the farmers on how much they get from delivering the service and how it has helped develop sustainability for their farm businesses. However, the effective delivery of Social Farming relies on collaboration with colleagues in the Health and Social Care Trusts, and other organisations who support people in need. Social Farming Standards will be important to this collaboration going forward". Minister of Health, Mr Robin Swann MLA said: "Social Farming is an important part of the services available in the community for people who are vulnerable and most in need. I look forward to seeing it go from strength to strength".



DAERA Minister Poots and Health Minister Swann launching Social Farming Standards with Rural Support's Chair John Thompson and CEO Veronica Morris



SoEngage Plus Project



First partner meeting of the SoEngage Plus project, held virtually 30th November

Rural Support are delighted to be a partner of another Erasmus+ project for a 2-year period (October 2020-September 2022). SoEngage Plus will build on the work achieved by the project partners (UK, Ireland, Germany, Poland, Spain, Romania) on developing training materials for farmers interested in Social Farming delivery within the SoEngage project 2018-2020 – www.soengage.eu. The focus of the project is digital resources (videos, podcasts) to tell the story of Social Farming in each partner region, which will aid the promotion of the service here in Northern Ireland. Updates on the project will be included in 2021 newsletters.

Christmas Cheer

Robert from Laurel View Equestrian Centre & Farm in Templepatrick, Co. Antrim made sure to bring some Christmas cheer for his Social Farming participants living in Muckamore Abbey. The COVID-19 restrictions have meant that the participants can't travel to the farm as normal, so Robert has been bringing (and dressing up) his animals to them! In a different and difficult year, this is a story to raise a smile.



Thank you for your interest in Social Farming in 2020 – looking forward to new developments and better times in 2021.