



Number of businesses registered:

11,742



Number of individuals registered:

24,464

Personal Development Plan

267 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS WERE CREATED DURING THIS PERIOD.



Mentoring Programme



569 MENTEES MENTORED



25 NEW MENTEES DURING THIS PERIOD

The most popular topics applied for during this period were:

Permaculture and regenerative agriculture



Succession



Pig rearing



Renewable energy



Demonstration Network

Plas yn lâl: Integrating income generation whilst improving and enhancing the environment

The main aim of the project at Plas yn lâl, a Farming Connect forestry focus site, is to integrate income generation whilst improving and enhancing environmental benefits by introducing the silvicultural practice of continuous cover forestry (CCF).

A ground physical survey of the woodland was carried out during December 2020 and gathered both timber and commercial data from 10 sample plots; recording tree sizes, species composition, regeneration, field layers and pole sizes.

The main findings showed that the existing stand structure has a volume increment of 7.2m³/ha/yr, equating to approximately 90 tonnes of timber or 178,365kWh/yr. Their wood fuel demand is approximately 28,000kWh/yr, which means that introducing CCF could provide 76 tonnes or 150,365kWh/yr of saleable timber annually.

The next step of the project is to undertake a drone survey to capture and compare stand data with the ground survey measurements. This will determine whether the viability of using a drone at scale could reduce the need for ground surveys. A CCF woodland management plan is also being planned and all felled timber will be graded and valued against cost of felling and extraction.

A successful webinar was held on 25 March 2021 to provide an insight of what has been done so far at Plas yn lâl. In addition to Phil Morgan's update on the project, Huw Beech, farmer at Plas yn lâl gave a background to the farm woodland and discussed what he hopes to get out of the focus site project; increase productivity and efficiency to provide public goods and fuel to run the biomass boiler. He also thanked Farming Connect for all the advice and guidance he has received, and revealed that he now considers the farm woodland an asset rather than a liability. Huw described the support he has received through the mentoring programme, advisory service and being a focus site as "invaluable".

Moelgan Fawr: Using technology to increase health monitoring – improving calving pattern, conception rates and reducing calving losses

A total of 39 smaXtec classic rumen boluses were administered to yearling Stabiliser heifers at Moelogan Fawr in 2020. The purpose of the bolus is to continuously measure the animal's activity and inner body temperature which can give an insight into the animal's health status, as well as detect changes and send alerts at calving and oestrus. One of the key elements for this project was to identify each heifer's insemination window by using the peak activity data, in order to carry out AI in-house at the most appropriate time within the cycle. The boluses were administered on 14 April 2020, with the monitoring period for heat detection commencing on 1 June 2020.

The first service AI pregnancy rates achieved has increased by >10% following bolus administration. This has resulted in achieving one of the project's Key Performance Indicators set at the outset, which was to increase the percentage of heifers that stand in the first serve from 57% to >65%. In addition to this, the number of semen straws used has decreased by 4% in 2020 compared with 2019 figures, which ultimately reduced costs.



Figure 1. Heifers at Moelogan Fawr demonstration site

Time spent on daily observation labour of the heifers was unchanged from previous years at five hours a day. Table 1 summarises the veterinary costs associated with impregnating the heifers prior to bolus administration, as well as post bolus administration. To note, the cost of the maturity scoring and pelvic measurements is not included as this was an additional assessment carried out as part of the project.

Table 1. Veterinary treatment costs associated with impregnating the heifers prior and post bolus application (CIDR (Controlled Internal Drug Release) system for heat synchronisation used in 2018 and 2019; boluses administered in 2020).

	2018	2019	2020
Vet cost (£/heifer)	£33.73	£29.51	£6.46
Financial saving from previous year (£/heifer)	N/A	-£4.22	-£23.05

In terms of additional costs, there was significant investment made at the beginning of the project for purchasing the boluses. This annual cost spread over four years is equivalent to <£32/heifer. This includes the provision of further data for the detection of health problems and calving.

Graig Olway: Tackling foot health worth £25,000 a year to Welsh dairy farm



Halving lameness rates from a one-time high of 49% has resulted in a cost saving of more than £25,000 a year for a Welsh dairy farm.

Graig Olway, near Usk, had been battling digital dermatitis and sole ulcers in its robotically milked herd of 170 high yielding Holsteins.

As a result of Farming Connect project work with vet Sara Pedersen, the lameness levels are down to 24% and this means farmer Russell Morgan is on track to meet the target he needs in order to secure a better milk contract.

The project got underway in January 2020 at a time when 39% of the herd was lame, including 25% of heifers. That situation was costing the business £50,370 a year in lost milk yield, poor fertility, cull values and treatments, calculated Ms Pedersen, a specialist in cattle health and production. Loss of production in a severely lame cow at score 3 is estimated to be £4.50/day and £1.50/day in a lame cow at score 2.

At the start of the three-year project, Mr Morgan had 10 cows at score 3 and 62 at score 2.

The AHDB Healthy Feet Programme was implemented and an action plan was formulated; this included a 'blitz' treatment regime for digital dermatitis followed up by a more effective footbathing regime to keep infection levels low. Milkers were footbathed four times a week and dry and transition cows three times. One of the measures taken to tackle sole ulcers was to replace cubicle mattresses, to encourage cows to lie down more.

Sole ulcers develop from standing too much and, because of poor mattress comfort, cows had not been lying down enough. To improve ventilation, space boarding was removed around the shed and fans were repositioned.

The foot trimming regime has been improved to ensure that cows are presented for trimming when needed and pre-calving heifers are now also included. Working closely with Cattle Hoof Care Standards Board-audited foot trimmer Alan Colebatch has been key, and constant communication with the team has helped drive decisions on further interventions and protocols, said Ms Pedersen. To aid this, Mr Morgan's partner, Sarah Smith, carries out fortnightly mobility scoring checks, to pick up on problems at the very early stages of lameness, before ulcers develop. Cases of lameness at Graig Olway spiked at 49% in the summer of 2020 as a result of heat stress.

But this was tackled with a data-driven approach to trimming and treatment options, reducing incidence to its current level of 24%; no cases of sole ulcers have been detected in the last five months. As the project moves forward, the focus will shift to improving ventilation to avoid a rise in lameness this summer and culling out cows with chronic lameness as heifers enter the herd.

Agrigôp

Working together within a group, Agrigôp members can learn new management skills, access specialist information and explore and develop viable futures for themselves, their families and their businesses.

61
ACTIVE
GROUPS
with

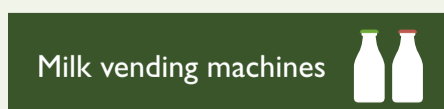
484
MEMBERS
attending a
total of

76
MEETINGS
during this
period

Topics discussed:



Tourism



Milk vending machines



Beekeeping



Dairy sheep

Advisory Service



90 individuals received one-to-one support through the Business Categories of the Advisory Service during this period.



6 groups received support through the Business Categories of the Advisory Service during this period.

Discussion Groups



Newtown Dairy Group – The effect of Brexit on farm labour and effective staff management

A survey by RABDF (Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers) in 2016 found over half of the respondents employed staff from outside of the UK in the last five years. Brexit will have an impact on being able to access these workers from now on. During the meeting, Rachael Davies from Kite Consulting went through the implication of Brexit on farm labour with the Newtown Dairy Group and discussed what is required from farmers looking to employ foreign dairy workers in the future.

She began by asking the group to introduce themselves, their business and specific details on their current business staffing structures to set the scene and give context to the evening.

As the group compared different staffing structures, they also looked at people strategy; how to attract new talent, retain staff, developing staff and embracing technology for more efficient practices. The group discussed their staff requirements and how they currently manage their staff. A discussion took place regarding talent progression and staff rewarding. Rachael mentioned that everyone's staffing requirements are different and they all need to fully address their requirements and how to ensure that their team is motivated and performing to its highest level.

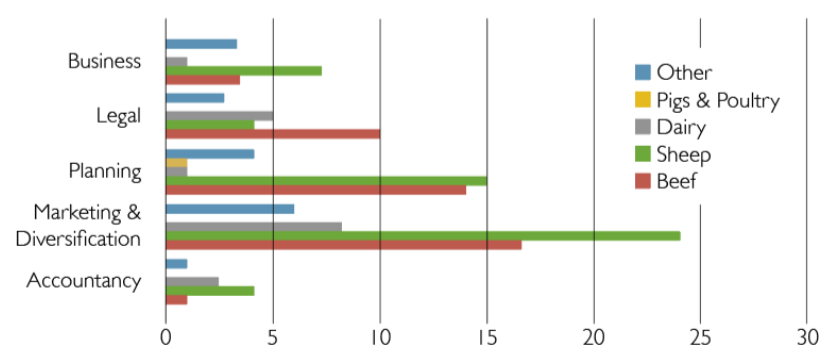
Through Farming Connect, eligible registered businesses can access up to 1 hour of fully funded advice from Rachael on staff management, and should they wish to access further advice, she is also an approved consultant on the Farming Connect Advisory Service framework. There is also funding available for skills training on a range of staff development courses for individuals, including PAYE employees.

Surgeries



19 SURGERIES HELD with **133 ATTENDEES**

Surgeries attendees according to main business sector



Feedback from beneficiaries:

"We were able to make decisions on the information given to us by the consultant. We learnt about possible costings and things that would challenge us and our idea and come up with solutions to solve them."

"The surgery highlighted things that we hadn't considered and learnt that we needed much more in-depth financial planning than we had already done."

EIP Wales

 **46** APPROVED PROJECTS WORKING

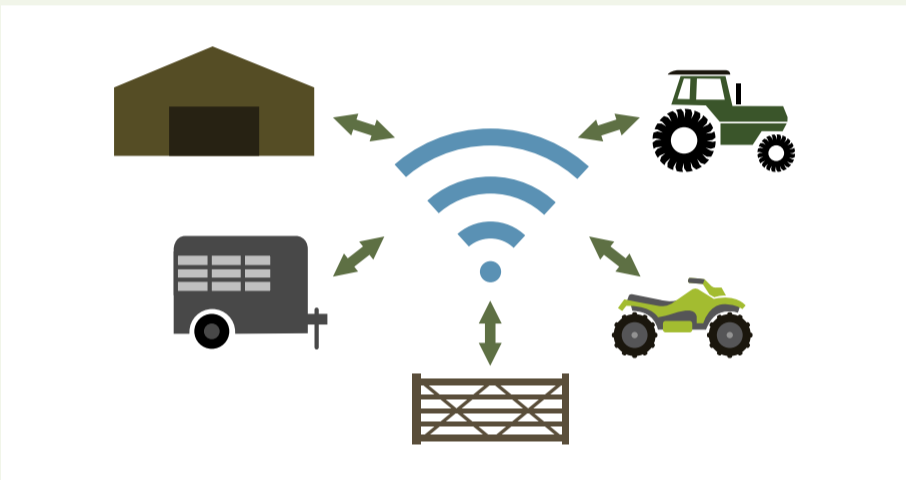
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 **232** FARMERS AND FORESTERS



Early adoption of on-farm IOT sensor networks to alert and notify farmers to improve security

Protecting the farm business is as important as developing it and a group of farmers in north Wales have come together to undertake an EIP Wales project to see whether sensors connected to the Internet of Things (IOT) network can provide a mechanism for early alerts to suspicious activity involving high risk property. Working with North Wales Police, the group will connect sensors to quad bikes, trailers, gates and doors which then send alerts when activated to their mobile phones. To demonstrate and test the potential of the technology, incidents will be simulated to see if alerts can be shared with police officers in an effective manner. Farm thefts cost farmers £2.6m per year and have a huge impact on businesses through loss of assets, damage, lost working time and cost of replacements as well as insurance premiums.



Venture

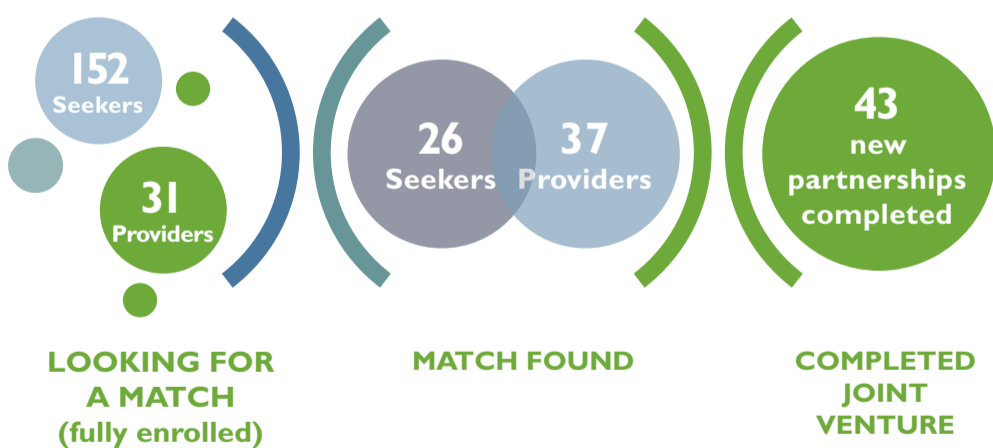
617



EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST SUBMITTED SINCE THE START OF VENTURE

419

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS



14,819
ACCRES OF LAND INVOLVED



63
FOUND A MATCH

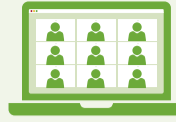
Knowledge Exchange Hub



STRATEGIES AND TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE FARM HEALTH AND SAFETY

Agriculture is statistically one of the most dangerous industries but for a business to operate successfully the workers need to be safe and healthy. This article explores how technology can assist with this including SMART devices that can monitor activity and location.

Webinars



12

LET'S TALK BUSINESS WORKSHOPS

held with



104
ATTENDEES

The series of interactive webinars discussed the main points to consider when planning ahead for the future of your business. These webinars presented crucial information on:

Business planning



Managing change



How to consider future opportunities



The importance of analysing the current state of the business



These were broadly split into business and technical advice. Eligible registered businesses were offered the opportunity to get a full scale review of their business and identification areas to strengthen, or hone into specific areas such as soil and forage analysis, guidance on livestock, biodiversity or farming 'greener'.

E-learning

Some of the e-learning courses completed within this period include:

HEALTH AND SAFETY



VAT



FARM BENCHMARKING



PLANNING AND FINANCE



Click [here](#) to visit the website.

Training

Courses	Number of individuals trained during this period
Bookkeeping	25
Understanding your Accounts and Financial Statements	13
Business Planning and Development	12
Marketing your Business	8
Emergency First Aid	8

ICT Programme

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
6-week training course = 56 individuals trained	One-to-one tutoring = 80 individuals trained	Workshops = 291 attendees

Workshop themes included:

- Latest drone technology and it's use within agriculture
- Digital marketing
- Slurry storage solutions with the AHDB Slurry Wizard
- CCTV, livestock and agricultural security

