



**667** OF BUSINESSES REGISTERED WITH FARMING CONNECT ARE ORGANIC

## Demonstration Network

### Cae Derw – Diversifying into horticulture and establishing a pick your own enterprise using the no-dig method



Figure 1: Cae Derw's pick your own enterprise using the no-dig method.

With support from Farming Connect, a project was set up, aimed at developing an ecologically sound, financially viable market garden, which would include fruit, vegetables, salad crops and flowers using the no-dig method. The project would also explore the use of wool in horticulture, using it as a base for weed suppression rather than cardboard. The main objective for Cae Derw is to grow as naturally and ecologically as possible, using local resources, such as peat-free compost and cattle and sheep muck from the next farm.

With the emphasis on enhancing public engagement, produce grown is targeted at the pick-your-own (PYO) market, providing opportunities for people to spend time outdoors and connect with local, natural food production and flowers. The no-dig system using raised beds suits this type of enterprise and, once established, the beds can be used for a range of crops.

The no-dig system offers a biodiverse way of growing as it provides a rich soil to grow in and it's an excellent way to clear a weed-infested growing area organically, without the use of chemicals. By avoiding digging, you will not be disrupting the soil life, the important micro-organisms, fungi and worms, that help feed plant roots.

Flower bulbs were planted through Mypex, which although more labour intensive now, reduces the weeding in the spring. The response from the public, starting with the daffodil sales in March was excellent. A new line in jam jar flowers was developed and this proved to be popular as the range of flowers increased. The public was encouraged to pick and cut flowers and arrange their own bunches. The raised flowerbeds for PYO days were really popular and successful financially, therefore, the plan is to do more of these in 2022, starting with spring bulbs.



Figure 2: Jam jar flowers picked and cut by the public and arranged into their own bunches.

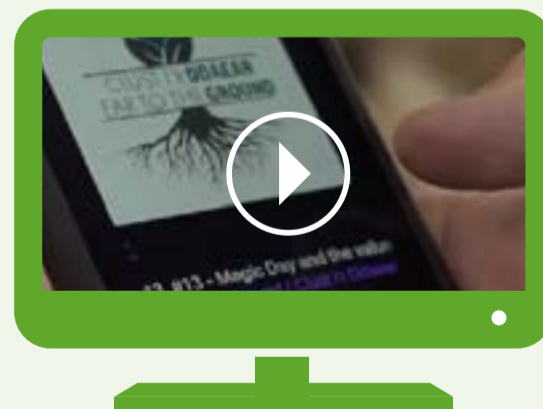
### Fedw Arian Uchaf – Improving hedgerows to define rotational grazing boundaries



Figure 3: Fedw Arian Uchaf's rotational grazing boundaries.

Geraint, Rachael and family run an organic beef and sheep hill farm on the outskirts of Bala and within the Snowdonia National Park. One overall objective is to improve the environmental performance of the farm, which will contribute to the equation of improving the financial performance of the farm business. Several options are being investigated and one avenue is to introduce a new, innovative rotational grazing system using traditional boundaries. To reduce workload of continuously moving electric fence boundaries, the project is making an assessment of the current matrix of hedgerows by producing a hedgerow management plan. This will identify and prioritise existing hedgerows for restoration and the potential to establish new ones to define areas of grazing needed for the suckler herd. Hedgerows are a key resource on the farm to provide shelter. Strong and robust shelter can mean earlier turnout of livestock in the spring and housing later into the autumn, thus relieving the pressure of increasing slurry volume in the pit and ammonia release.

The surveying work will be used to formulate a long-term vision in line with management requirements, focusing on e.g. water quality, shelter, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, biosecurity and contribution to sustainable land management outcomes. This will be translated into a programme of work over a period of years with specific priorities for implementation by choosing capital options as and when pilot schemes become available for application. The vision is to build and prepare to apply to the new Sustainable Farming Scheme and meet the universal option criteria needed to access the scheme. Further tree planting will take place this winter to establish and trial an agroforestry system that will provide buffer zones along watercourses and provide shelter in extreme weather conditions whilst increasing biodiversity and carbon sequestration on the farm.



Click [here](#) to watch Episode 65 – Improving the environmental and economic performance of the farm.

## Surgeries



**2** SURGERIES HELD



Key topics included:

Grassland management and forage crops



The two surgeries wanted to discuss and ask for grassland advice.

## Knowledge Exchange Hub

The following technical articles have been produced by the KE Hub:

-  UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF ALTERNATIVE CROPS: NEW INCOME AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
-  SHEEP DAIRY PRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING BEFORE UPSCALING
-  PHOTO SELECTIVE POLYMER FILMS FOR CROP GROWTH AND PROTECTION
-  BATTLING BRACKEN: CONTROL AND ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES
-  INDOOR OR IN-FIELD: CLIMATE IMPACTS OF CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT GROWTH
-  GROWING CROPS FOR THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY
-  BIOLOGICAL INDICATORS OF SOIL HEALTH
-  ECOSYSTEM FUNCTION AND RESILIENCE: WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR AGRICULTURE?
-  SHEEP SCAB: UPDATE AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS
-  THE IMPACT OF HERBAL LEYS ON THE HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE OF GRAZING LAMBS
-  FARMING'S FUNGI FOCUS: CONSIDERING BELOW GROUND TO BENEFIT ABOVE GROUND
-  MYCORRHIZA MANIPULATION: NATURE VS NURTURE

## Discussion Groups



16

DISCUSSION GROUP MEETINGS RELEVANT TO THE ORGANIC SECTOR

held with



173

ATTENDEES

## Training

There have been **6** application windows between October 2021 and September 2022 with **1,064** instances of training delivered during this period.

Examples of courses potentially relating to the Organic sector were:

Planning a diversification or new enterprise on a farm



Introduction to worm control and faecal egg counting for sheep producers



Safe use and application of slurries



## E-learning

Some of the e-learning courses completed within this period relating to the Organic sector:



COMPOSTED FARMYARD MANURE



WEED CONTROL



REDUCING AGRI-POLLUTION



ORGANIC HORTICULTURE



For more information on e-learning, please visit the [website](#).

## Mentoring

We have **13 Organic Mentors** on the framework.



Topics include:

Manage more efficiently and welfare on organic ground to use in my meat boxes

Organic dairy enterprise

Organic beekeeping



Click here for **Alan's profile**



Click here for **Dafydd's profile**



Click here for **David's profile**



Click here for **Haydn's profile**



Click here for **Helen's profile**



Click here for **Jim's profile**



Click here for **Keri's profile**



Click here for **Phillip's profile**



Click here for **Richard's profile**



Click here for **Romeo's profile**



Click here for **Adam's profile**



Click here for **Lowri's profile**



Click here for **Rachel's profile**

## Management Exchange



Gerald Miles, a seventh-generation farmer, together with his son Gerald, runs an organic pasture-fed Belted Welsh Black suckler herd in Pembrokeshire. They also have a flourishing glamping enterprise at their spectacular coastal location. In addition, they grow 20 acres of ancient wheat varieties including Black Oats; Emmer Wheat, Einkorn Wheat; April Bearded and Hen Gymro. Gerald helped set up Wales' first Community Supported Agriculture group and has joined a 'Seed Sovereignty' initiative to safeguard the new wheat varieties against legislation which puts them at risk.

*"My exchange will enable me to learn how others have progressed from growing to processing on-farm and supplying artisan bakers. I hope the knowledge I gain will lead to the creation of a farmers' co-operative and a viable market for Welsh wheat."*