

Social Farming Newsletter

Spring 2016

Welcome to the Social Farming Newsletter produced in collaboration by the Social Farming Support Office in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In this edition we outline the role of the Support Offices and provide an update on activity in 2015 and 2016 to date.

- ◆ Update from Social Farming Support Office (NI):
- ◆ Update from Social Farming Support Office (RoI):

Social Farming Support Offices:

The Social Farming Support Offices (RoI and NI) have been established to continue the work of the Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project. SoFAB was a highly successful EU INTERREG IVA Funded project which operated in the Border counties of Ireland and all of Northern Ireland in the period 2011-2014.

Social Farming Support Office (RoI):

The Social Farming Office (RoI) was opened in April 2015 by the Leitrim Development Company with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine and the CEDRA Fund. The role of the office, which is staffed on a part-time basis by Helen Doherty and Brian Smyth, includes the provision of advice and guidance to farmers /farm families who wish to establish social farming services, through information and training events; assistance in the development of service users and their families' understanding of the potential and delivery of social farming services; raise public awareness of social farming through public events, mainstream and social media; and engage with and support new initiatives around Ireland which are progressing and developing social farming.

Social Farming Support Office (NI):

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has provided support for the continued development of Social Farming in Northern Ireland through the appointment of a Social Farming Service Coordinator within Rural Support. Through this role, Rural Support will further develop the network of providers and users and provide new opportunities for individuals to avail of and benefit from Social Farming activities.

Rural Support was formed as a charity in 2002 in response to the increasing pressures on farm families.

Update from Social Farming Support Office (NI)

Social Farming Taster Sessions

In February 2016, the Public Health Agency (PHA) with the support of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) approved funding for Social Farming taster sessions to take place on 8 social farms across Northern Ireland. Within the project, 24 service users who have not previously participated in Social Farming will have the opportunity to engage in 6 sessions. As part of the funding, research will be conducted into the potential cost saving for the Health Service resulting from Social Farming. The farms are located within the five Health and Social Care Trusts, meaning that service users in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have the opportunity to avail of Social Farming for the first time. This is a significant development in the progress of Social Farming in Northern Ireland and Rural Support wish to thank the PHA and HSCB for their support.

Training

Rural Support organised training on 'Keeping Adults Safe: Training for Staff and Volunteers' in March 2016 for those interested in delivering Social Farming in the future. The one day certificated training course, delivered by Volunteer Now, covered awareness of vulnerability, the legal context of adult safeguarding, awareness of abuse issues, procedures for reporting concerns, procedures for planning activities and assessing and managing risk, confidentiality issues, and a code of behaviour for staff/volunteers — all key learning points for those who attended.



DEL Committee and Social Farming Showcase in Stormont

The Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) Committee as part of their inquiry into post Special Educational Need (SEN) provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland, visited a social farm in Garrison, Co. Fermanagh in late 2015. During the visit, committee members had the chance to meet social farmers, and to hear from a representative of the Western Health and Social Care Trust and the service users themselves about the benefits of Social Farming. As a result of the successful visit, a delegation of social farmers, service users and their families, and support staff from both jurisdictions were invited to a Social Farming showcase in Stormont buildings on 19th January 2016. The event placed the focus on the service users who were able to talk to politicians in the Executive about why they look forward to their day on the farm and how they want to continue availing of the opportunity. The positive atmosphere in the room reflected the essence of what Social Farming is about—making connections and social inclusion.



Engagement with the Prison Service — visit to Magilligan Prison

An introductory meeting between Rural Support and representatives from the Department of Justice and the Prison Service led to an invitation to further the discussion with ourselves and social farmers in Magilligan Prison in March 2016. This meeting allowed the social farmers to learn about potential linkages between the Prison Service and what they deliver on their farms. We are keen to continue to work with this sector as Social Farming has the potential to deliver benefits to individuals who are transitioning back into their communities and a cross departmental approach is key.

Update from Social Farming Support Office (RoI)

Development Activity

Since the Support Office opened in April 2015, there has been considerable time and effort spent organising and attending events aimed at exploring the concept of Social Farming and its development in areas throughout the country. The Support Office staff, Helen Doherty and Brian Smyth, have engaged with groups in counties Kilkenny, Waterford, Kerry, Tipperary and Mayo with further engagements planned in Limerick and Dublin. A key focus of the office has also been on supporting Social Farming engagements on farms through working with the HSE service representatives. One such successful project involved three farms delivering Social Farming for HSE Mental Health services in Sligo/Leitrim.



Savour Kilkenny



Waterford



Kerry



Tipperary



Mayo

SoFarm Project Launch

SoFarm is a project led by Rural Area Partnership in Derry (RAPID) Ltd in partnership with Gortilea Social Farm, Claudy and Butterlope Social Farm, Plumbridge. It is supported by the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020 through the Department for Employment and Learning and the Health and Social Care Board. The focus of the project is to use Social Farming to enable people with disabilities to achieve their aspirations and play a fuller role in society by undertaking training on the Social Farms and through RAPID, which is a LANTRA training centre. A project launch was held on March 24th 2016, which included a farm walk on Gortilea Social Farm. Minister for Employment for Learning, Dr. Stephen Farry attended the event and presented certificates to project participants who have completed their Level 1 LANTRA qualification.



SoFarm participants – Gortilea Social Farm

SoFAB Catch-up

A catch-up event for the farmers who were SoFAB pilots and the Support Office staff took place in December 2015. This gave everyone the opportunity to hear about the progress on individual farms since the project ended in September 2014. The role of the Support Offices was highlighted to the group. A similar one day event will take place in May 2016 with scope to include training as well as engagement with farmers who have become social farmers and those interested in doing so in the future.



SoFAB pilots and Support Office staff

GET IN TOUCH...

If you have any queries in relation to Social Farming, please contact either Support Office on the details below.

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