

Welcome to the fifth Green Newsletter from your local Climate Ambassador. This edition brings more local and national information to our attention. This issue also includes an interesting perspective on the Environment written by a Derbyshire farmer, WI member.

Local News

A big thank you to all Baslow members who are sowing their free seeds from our February monthly meeting. Have a look on our website and Facebook to see the results. Don't forget to recycle or reuse where possible, like Karen has with her coffee cups.



National News

The Great Big Green Week will be happening from 10th to 18th June 2023. If you want to find out more about what is happening around the UK, the Website is www.greatbiggreenweek.com. It is also on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

NFWI Annual Meeting

The NFWI Annual meeting was on 25th May this year. The Resolution debate was focused on Clean Rivers for People & Wildlife.

It is interesting to note that a previous NFWI mandate stated that "This meeting urges the appropriate Ministries to take immediate practical action to improve all inadequate sewerage systems with a view to preventing the pollution of our watercourses and seashores." Southerndown WI – Glamorgan Federation, June 1958. (Yes 1958!)

Farming and the Environment – a small farmer's thoughts

"What is a farmer? Most people would say he/she produces food, arable crops and livestock for meat and milk. DEFRA (the government Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) introduces the environment into the equation.

Since WW2 purchasing food for the home has cost less and less, and we have become used to and expect 'cheap food'. Why should a pint of milk cost four times less than a pint of beer? Being honest, which would you say is more beneficial to us? So how can a small family farm continue to exist?



These farms usually have only one full time worker, who does all the manual work, deals with the health and safety of his livestock, maintains his expensive machinery, keeps up to date with the farm records, and probably does the accounts as well. This person has little spare time for his family, let alone working with others to demand more for his produce. He cannot go on strike or attend endless meetings. This makes

a farmer an easy target. He continues to work hard, because he loves his land, his livestock, and feels he is doing his best to produce food to help feed this country. Looking after the environment should be a joy and a privilege for farmers. Farmers have always looked after their land and visitors to the countryside have liked to see the orderliness of hedgerows, grass verges, green meadows with cattle and sheep grazing, and arable fields with waves of golden corn. To plant a new hedge, create a small coppice, develop a pond and put up bird boxes are examples encouraged, and make small corners of unproductive land very useful for wildlife.

The Government has introduced a number of environmental schemes and if any are signed up for, you are committed to follow the rules. Grass cannot be cut until 1st July, after the grass has seeded. This gives time for insects to feed on the nectar. So no silage harvest, but hopefully good quality hay can be made. How does this practice compare to a tractor towing a very wide crop sprayer boom, covering the plants with weed killer/insecticide? Hedges, other than roadside hedges, cannot be cut every year and not until late in the summer. Manures cannot be spread within 5 metres of any water courses. Some land is designated NVZ (nitrate vulnerable zones) where other rules must be adhered to by all farmers. Of course, there will be some farmers who would not want to apply for any environmental schemes, preferring to continue farming intensively to make their way financially.

Much has been said and written about farming causing a lot of damage to the environment. But pollution comes from many different sources and people are quick to criticise farming. Yes, cows do pollute the atmosphere, but so do many other activities. Have you considered the value of cows' milk and manure to the farmer? The milk either feeds us, the consumer, or nourishes her calves. The manure falls on grass during the summer grazing. In winter, the manure (agricultural muck), is spread on the fields by tractor and spreader. Either way, it fertilizes the land and saves the farmers from having to buy in expensive artificial fertilizer to make his grass grow.

It is obvious that we should be thinking about alternative fuels, such as wind, water and solar energies. But to instal solar panels on hundreds of acres of good food producing land, sometimes even former organic land, is sacrilege. Solar panels should be sited on brown field sites and poorer land.

What about planes, lorries hauling huge containers, factory chimneys, all sending their waste products (industrial muck) into the atmosphere. The UK should be producing as much food as possible, to stop unnecessary food mileage. Please support British farming and help to keep these small family farms surviving for many more generations."

From a South Derbyshire small farmer having a suckler herd.

Keep Thinking Green

This Green Newsletter needs your input to make it worth doing for all Baslow members. What would you like more information on for our next issue? Bring your ideas to our next WI Meeting, put them in the box near the noticeboard marked '**Thinking Green**'.

Janette

Baslow WI Climate Ambassador