

North Pennines Smallholder update April 2015

A group of smallholders met with Ruth to discuss the events and workshops over the last year and to work out what could be done over the next year. Here are the general findings from the meeting:

- A number of smallholders were interested in some of the meetings being held in the **evenings**, so that people at work could attend.
- At least eight people were interested in a **rush management** workshop being run again, and this would work well as an on-farm workshop.
- Meadow management was discussed along with the best way of restoring and diversifying these areas for wildlife. There was a lot of interest in a workshop showing how to collect and store seeds, and how to grow these on as **plug-plants** to plant into wildflower meadows/gardens.
- A number of smallholders were interested in running a similar **wildflower and bumblebee** workshop again, which could easily be arranged, including an on-farm visit.
- There was great interest in a workshop looking at **woodland management**, and this could be expanded to include an on-farm event where smallholders would get the chance to look around smallholdings.
- There was a discussion on the changes in the **safe use of pesticides** – there is a trainer in Cumbria that could arrange some training; there are details on this website; <https://www.nptc.org.uk/assets/documents/c3f2adabe57f4893a058af0c49042632.pdf>; or a smallholder mentioned an online training package – if you know more about this could you let Ruth know or post on the website/Facebook?
- In discussing whether to have another workshop on meadow management, it was suggested to have a different focus and discuss **how to manage weedy species** like weed control, pesticides, strimming and grazing techniques. This would be an on-farm workshop.
- There was a discussion about livestock and a few people felt it would be good to ask a Vet to talk through things like **worming and ticks**.
- There was a general consensus that it would be good to **share emails**, however, this would be hard to organise.
- The possibility of developing a **Scything network** was discussed. Since then, Ruth has found out that Steve Tomlin is planning to do this in the North of England. When more information is known about this, the information will be posted on the website.
- The North Pennines AONB Partnership can assist with the development of the network over the next two years of the Nectarworks project whilst Ruth is in post. After this, if the network is to continue, it needs to become self-sufficient. There was general consensus that a new **committee** should be set up and established over the next few years so that this could continue to assist with the running of the network in two years' time.

Key feedback:

Sharing emails – please use the website and Facebook to communicate with one another. If you would like to be in contact with a particular smallholder, let Ruth know and she can check that it is okay to share emails.

Workshops and events – Ruth will be able to assist with the organisation of at least three workshops this year and possibly one more if time and budget allows using the feedback from last year's workshops and recent meeting. When the workshops are arranged, the details will be posted on the website.

On-farm – It is likely that workshops will be held on woodland management; how to manage weedy species (including thistles, docks and rushes) and how to grow plug-plants. An extra workshop on bumblebee and wildflower identification might be held. As these workshops will be on-farm, it would be very helpful if you could let me know whether you would like to hold one of these on your smallholding.

Committee – In order to sustain the longevity of the network, it would be great to establish a committee. If you would like to volunteer to be on the committee, please let Ruth know: ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk

If you would like to post something to the **news feed** on the website, please email Richard Thompson: webmaster@northpenninessmallholders.co.uk

Ruth would like to say thank-you very much for attending the recent meeting and attending the workshops and events over the last year. The smallholder network is developing well and should go from strength to strength over the next year.