



Life R4EVER KENT

LIFE R4ever Kent

Event evaluation

Optimising Farm Resources: Soil, Plants, Livestock

Date: 11/07/2023

Time: 10:00am – 3:00pm

Location: The Bryce Institute, Burneside, Cumbria

Title: Optimising Farm Resources: Soil, Plants, Livestock

Speaker: Charlie Morgan Grassmaster Ltd (a farm advisor and independent grassland and forage specialist).

With an introduction and brief project background by Joe Rigby (LIFE R4ever Kent Catchment Management Advisor).

Purpose: To promote more considered use of nutrients and greater awareness of soil health amongst farmers in the catchment. One of the 10 water pollution workshops. Better nutrient utilisation and improved soil health for the benefit of the river.

Programme:

10:00am to 10:30am – Welcome, drinks and introduction

10:30am to 12:00pm – Charlie Morgan presentation

12:00pm to 12:54pm – Pie and peas lunch (provided)

12:45pm to 3:00pm – Short walk for field visit to dig soil inspection pits

Promotion:

Event was promoted in the mailshot that was posted to 300 landowners listed on the RLR database.

It was promoted again in 199 follow-up emails (email addresses from RLR database).



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Contacts at The Farmer Network and the NFU were made aware of the event, though it's not known what onward promotion they undertook.

Bookings were taken through Eventbrite, though several attendees requested a place by contacting the project team directly.

Attendees:

- 12 farmers/land managers
- 4 LIFE R4ever Kent project staff (FBA, SCRT, NE)
- 1 Natural England non-project staff (Agri-env Team)

Feedback:

A feedback questionnaire was circulated round the farmer/land manager attendees at the end of the event. Responses were provided by 10.

The feedback questionnaire asked eight questions, with three possible answers for each. The responses are summarised in the table below:

Question:	Answer		
	Yes	Not sure	No
Did the workshop meet your expectations?	8	2	-
Did you find the workshop useful?	9	1	-
Would you recommend this workshop to other farmers?	9	1	-
Do you think you would alter your farm management after today's workshop?	5.5	2.5	1
Would you like to have more detailed workshops about the topics covered today?	9	1	-



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Would you be interested in attending other workshops covering different topics?	10	-	-
	Good	Not sure	Bad
How was the food at today's workshop?	10	-	-
How was the location of today's workshop location?	10	-	-

One respondent circled across 'yes' and 'not sure' for one question, suggesting that they would have liked a greater choice of possible answers.

The feedback questionnaire had a section for 'Any other comments (or suggestions for future workshops)'.

A couple of comments stated that the speaker was 'brilliant' and 'really useful and informative'.

Suggestions for future workshops included more specific individual advice tailored toward particular outcomes, with more focus on hill farms. And covering topics of regenerative or organic agriculture.

Summary notes and impressions:

Generally appeared to be a well-received and informative event. Some of the learnings were potentially not that relevant to hill farms, which form much of the catchment.

Enabled relationship-building with at least four catchment farmers who previously haven't engaged. No attendees requested a farm visit at the time, although one has subsequently requested a visit.

The field used for the soil pits was permanent pasture under very extensive management. As a result, the soil inspection pits didn't reveal good examples of the problems that might be encountered on more intensively managed and/or 'overgrazed' land. This was known as a risk beforehand, but the project team are yet to build relationships with farmers who would definitely have such land. Future events would be better to include visits to more intensively-managed farms. None of the attendees brought a soil sample from home, although they were invited to do so.

The venue was suitable, with no issues identified.

The attendee feedback showed an appetite for more workshops, covering other topics.



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