



The Farming
Life Centre

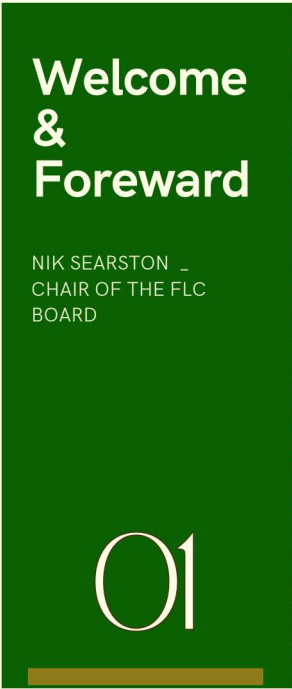
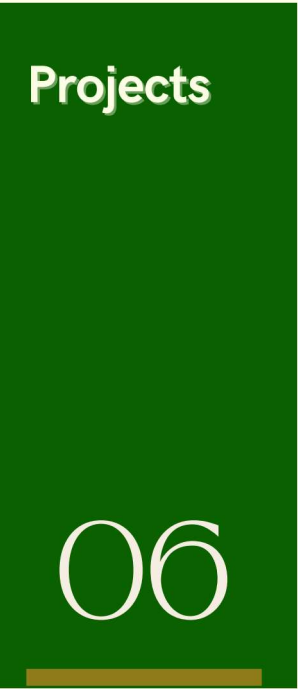
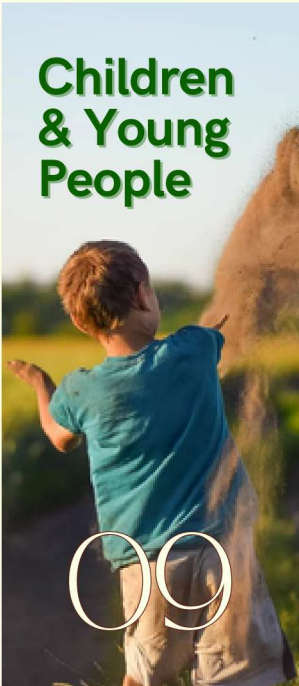
2024-2025

Annual Review

Supporting Farming & Rural
Life in the Peak District



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Welcome & Foreward

01

By the FLC Chair

Nik Searston

The farming industry is more than just hard work and dedication; it is a way of life passed down through generations. Farmers are the backbone of our society, providing the food and resources essential for our survival.

The Farming Life Centre continues to innovate and develop new projects to support rural and farming communities within The Peak District, Staffordshire Moorlands, and surrounding areas. Our goal is to help these communities become more resilient and overcome any challenges they may face. Now, more than ever, our services and projects are crucial for assisting farm businesses and rural communities.

With the addition of new projects, we have expanded our dedicated staff at the Bakewell office, enriching our team with new personalities and skill sets. The Trustees regularly meet with Rachel, our Charity Manager, to review ongoing performance and plan for the future. We are always seeking passionate individuals to join our Trustee team. If you have a desire to help and support others, please get in touch.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved with The Farming Life Centre for their hard work and dedication, which make our charity the amazing organisation it is.



Nik Searston

FLC Chair

"The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings." – Masanobu Fukuoka

Charity Manager's Report

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We extend our deepest appreciation to our generous donors, supporters and funders. Without your continued support, The Farming Life Centre would not be here today. Your commitment enables us to stand alongside our farming and rural communities across the Peak District offering vital support during times of challenge and change.

We are immensely grateful to the individuals, businesses, charitable trusts, fundraising groups, and Government bodies who have made this possible along with all our valued and dedicated volunteers, staff and board members for their time, effort and vital support.

In today's climate of transition and uncertainty, farming families are facing complex decisions that affect their businesses, their loved ones, and the land they care for. While many farmers continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience, others are navigating increasingly difficult circumstances. In today's climate of transition and uncertainty, farming families are facing complex decisions that affect their businesses, their loved ones, and the land they care for.

While many farmers continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience, others are navigating increasingly difficult circumstances. We believe that everyone—whether working on the land, in the agricultural industry, in Government, or in the voluntary sector—has a role to play in supporting our farmers. These are the people who feed the nation and steward the land that will help us address some of society's greatest challenges, including food security, energy resilience, and climate change.

We are working proactively to ensure that no one in our rural communities feels alone in facing the future. As we look ahead, we reaffirm our belief that the future of our nation depends on a strong, healthy, and supported farming community. We must continue to empower, respect, and bring hope to those who dedicate their lives to feeding us all.

The Farming Life Centre is committed to supporting farming communities across the Peak District

Rachel Metcalfe

Charity Manager

About FLC

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Based in the heart of the Peak District, The Farming Life Centre is a dedicated charity supporting the health, wellbeing, and resilience of farming and rural communities. With a strong presence at Bakewell Market and across the region, the Charity offers practical business support, wellbeing initiatives, and social connection opportunities tailored to the unique needs of those living and working in agriculture.

Run by a team with deep roots in farming, the Charity delivers a range of impactful projects—from peer support groups and befriending services to health walks and women in agriculture initiatives. Through partnerships with organisations like The Royal Countryside Fund, The Farming Life Centre continues to empower farmers and promote sustainable rural livelihoods.

Structure, Governance & Management

The Farming Life Centre became a Charitable Company in 2009. It is governed by a Board of Trustees/Directors which meets on a quarterly basis to receive a full project report from the Charity Manager, a full financial report from the Treasurer and to consider all strategic issues relating to the Charity.

FLC currently employs six staff, with three new positions created in 2024/25.

FLC Trustees



Chris Morris



Mark Lowe



Anne Morgan



Fiona Hadfield



George Case



Lorna Critchlow

About FLC

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FLC Team



Tiffany Belfield

Tiffany lives on her family dairy farm on the Derbyshire/ Staffordshire border and has had a keen interest in agriculture from a young age. In her role here Tiffany loves supporting farmers to get to grips with current grants, red-tape and any opportunities available to them on farm.



Alice Morley

Alice is a farmer's daughter from the Hope Valley and has worked in agriculture for the past 10 years. She joined the team in November 2022 as Farm Business Project Coordinator. In her role Alice coordinates the farm for the future workshops and offers practical support helping rural businesses to navigate the agricultural policy changes.



Tony Faulkner

Tony comes from a land management background in New Zealand where he had a long history of working with farmers on a range of issues involving soil erosion and water quality. He is now based in Wirksworth and joined the team in September 2024.



Chloe Redfearn

Chloe, her partner and children have a dairy farm on the edge of Matlock and is a teacher outside of her role at The Farming Life Centre. She is passionate about improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people from rural backgrounds .



Donna Crump

Donna joined the team in October 2024. Her befriending coordinator role involves helping those people in our community who may be feeling lonely or challenged by introducing them to a farming friend who can offer company, a listening ear and laughter. She grew up next door to a farm which sparked a love for the outdoors and rural life.

Outreach & Engagement



Events

ATTENDED

54

FLC HOSTED

64



Training

Training at the Farming Life Centre plays a vital role in supporting staff development and strengthening community impact. Team members regularly take part in safeguarding, mental health, and digital safety training, as well as attend conferences and collaborative workshops with NHS and VCSE partners. These opportunities help build knowledge, improve service delivery, and ensure the team stays up to date with best practices for supporting farming and rural communities.



Social Media

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

1,591

UP 184



SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

121



CONTENT INTERACTIONS

2.8K





Peak Women in Ag

Since launching Peak Women in Ag in May 2024, we've held 12 meetings, with a total of 800 attendees that's an average of 66 women at each event. These numbers show there's a real need for a group where women involved in farming and rural life in the Peak District can come together and support each other.

What started as a simple idea has grown into a strong, welcoming group. Our members come from all areas of agriculture and rural businesses. We share ideas, learn new things, and help each other face the challenges of living and working on farms.

A huge thank you goes to our Steering Group Lorna Critchlow, Jess Marshall and Laura Worthington. Your time and effort keep our meetings interesting and useful. Thanks also to Dave and Charlotte Gibson at The Cowshed Café, Millers Dale for providing us with such a friendly place to meet.

Over the past year, our meet-ups have covered everything from flower arranging and practical talks on farm support schemes to walks up Mam Tor and fun in Chatsworth Playground.



Farm For The Future

The Farm for the Future project came to an end in March 2025, marking the conclusion of an impactful three year programme. Throughout this time, we have worked alongside more than 200 farmers, providing them with support to help build resilience and plan for a sustainable future.

The project offered a variety of workshops focusing on business development, environmental stewardship, and practical topics relevant to modern farming. These included sessions on inheritance planning, carbon management, grassland improvement, and soil health all designed to equip farmers with the knowledge and confidence to adapt to a rapidly changing agricultural landscape.



Peak Farmers Group

The Peak Farmers Group (PFG) was established in 2022 as a collaborative farmer led group to discuss issues and share ideas amongst Peak District Farmers. PFG was funded through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL). Over the course of 2024/25, PFG hosted 8 events including farm walks and presentations from other farmers and experts, including a Nuffield Scholar. A total of 275 people attended the events with an average of 35 per event. PFG was wound up at the end of March 2025 with the ending of the FiPL funding.

Projects

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Health & Wellbeing



Walking for Health

In 2024-2025, the Farming Life Centre continued to deliver a successful programme of guided walks in conjunction with Walk Derbyshire and Derbyshire Dales District Council. Led by our trained volunteers, the walks offered participants the chance to enjoy the Peak District's stunning scenery while supporting physical activity, mental wellbeing, and social connection.

Walks took place in a variety of beautiful locations including the Monsal Trail, Chatsworth Park, Bakewell, Monyash, and Tideswell Dale, with routes tailored to suit a range of abilities. Each walk concluded with a visit to a local café, where participants could enjoy refreshments and continue conversations in a warm, welcoming setting.

These walks not only encouraged healthy habits but also helped reduce isolation and build confidence, often serving as a gateway into other Farming Life Centre activities.



Befriending

The first volunteers were in place early in 2025. By the end of February initial visits between FLC volunteers and service users were taking place. Word has continued to spread, along with extensive promotion of the new service quickly growing the reach. With more volunteers coming forward we can continue to make a positive difference to even more members of our community.

Rural Social Groups



Rural Social Groups

The Rural Social Groups remain a vital part of the Farming Life Centre's mission to support the health and wellbeing of people living and working in the Peak District's farming and rural communities. These groups offer regular opportunities for social connection, peer support, and access to information in a relaxed, welcoming environment.

Key Achievements:

- 3 Rural Social Groups held regularly across the Peak District
- 150+ individuals engaged throughout the year
- 12 dedicated volunteers supported delivery, transport, and refreshments

Activities & Themes:

The Rural Social Groups offered a varied and engaging programme throughout the year, designed to support wellbeing, reduce isolation, and strengthen community ties. Activities were shaped by participant interests and seasonal opportunities, and included:

- Monthly Meetups
- Guest Speakers & Summer Outings- A highlight of the year was the summer outings.

- Creative & Seasonal Activities- Hands-on sessions including arts and crafts, memory-sharing, and themed events around Easter, harvest, and Christmas.
- Wellbeing Support - Gentle movement, mindfulness activities, and signposting to local services.

Challenges

Despite the positive impact of the Rural Social Groups, several challenges emerged during 2024-2025:

- *Transport Barriers* - Many participants in remote areas continue to face difficulties accessing group venues due to limited public transport and a lack of community transport options.
- *Volunteer Recruitment* - Sustaining and expanding the groups relies heavily on volunteers. Recruiting and retaining local volunteers remains a key priority to ensure continuity and growth.
- *Rising Costs* - The increasing cost of venue hire, refreshments, and materials has placed additional pressure on the programme. Continued fundraising and partnership support are essential to maintain delivery.



Children & Young People

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Farm Club

Our Young Person's Farm Club started in November 2024 and runs in two Secondary schools around the Peak District - Hope Valley College and Lady Manners School. Our club gives students a place where they can be themselves and explore a range of opportunities both in and out of agriculture.

Meetings are fortnightly and cover a range of topics led by the students. We've had agronomists, nutritionists, dry stone walling, NFU, farming abroad, farming celebrities and much more. Hope Valley College thoroughly enjoyed a really insightful and inspiring trip to Bent Farm, Tissington, to see a rotary milking parlour and how technology can be used in dairy farming. Our clubs support approx. 30-35 young people over our two schools.



Kid's Club

Our Kid's Club currently runs at two venues: Sheen Village Hall and Hardensclough Farm, Edale. Our Kid's Club has been extremely popular and is often oversubscribed! We have run activities such as clay creators, bird bonanza and making woodland wands and broomsticks. It's a wonderful opportunity for children from rural backgrounds to come together and enjoy a range of activities at the same time as making new friends! We host our Kid's Club once a week in the school holidays and have an average of 35-40 children attend across the two venues.



Tiny Farmer's Club

Tiny Farmer's Club was established in November 2024 and has been a huge success so far. Grown-ups and their tiny tots from a rural/ farming background meet on the second Wednesday of each month for an interactive morning on the farm. We have an average of 25-30 members at our club who love to run around, get dirty and have lots of farm fun! The club creates a space for adults and tiny tots to make friends with people from similar backgrounds. Our meetings are kindly hosted by farms in and around the Peak District. So far, we've visited Edale, Little Hayfield, Tideswell and Barmoor Clough, Buxton.



Business Support

Grant Funding - Farm Businesses

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From April 2024 to April 2025, there were 52 farm visits, with 19 focused on helping farmers apply for capital grants aimed at environmental improvements. The strict application process requires various documents, and assistance is provided to meet rural payments agency standards, including for woodland grants and diversification ideas. During this time, the farm equipment and technology fund was closed but reopened in May 2025.

Additionally, 19 visits helped farmers with grant claims, addressing confusion over submitting required documents and contacting local authorities for planning consent, thus aiding farmers in securing promised funding.

An additional 16 visits were general farm visits where support could not be effectively provided over the phone or by email, making in-person assistance essential. During these visits, advice was given on a wide range of topics including scheme overviews, farm assurance compliance, succession planning, land mapping changes, rural payments registration, diversification, and digital issues.

Farmers were also signposted to other relevant advice and support services. These face-to-face visits are especially important for individuals who are harder to reach, as they contribute to improved personal wellbeing and increased resilience of farm businesses.

In addition to in-person visits, support was also provided to approximately 50 farmers and rural individuals via phone, email, and messaging. A strong presence was maintained within the local farming community, with regular attendance at livestock markets, shows, and events. This visibility helped build trust and approachability, enabling members of the farming community to share concerns and seek support when needed.

Notably, younger farmers often reached out via social media platforms such as Facebook Messenger and Snapchat for timely advice and help with their businesses. Close collaboration also took place with local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers to ensure timely support was available in situations that could cause significant stress or worry for farmers.

"Farming isn't just a job; it's a way of life."

Funding

The Farming Life Centre is deeply grateful to our funders for their continued support throughout 2024-2025. Their investment enables us to deliver vital services that improve wellbeing, resilience, and sustainability in the Peak District and Staffordshire Moorlands. Thanks to their generosity, we've expanded our reach through initiatives like Farm Business Visits, Rural Social Groups, and youth engagement projects such as Tots on Farms and Farm Club. Our funders play a crucial role in helping us empower farming communities and respond to the evolving challenges they face.



Expenditure	2023-2024	2024-2025
Employment Costs	£52,092	£69,576
Project Costs	£11,878	£13,419
Travel Costs	£3,114	£4,262
Training	£283	£150
Advertising & Promotional	£1,511	£1,511
IT Costs	£807	£2,394
Office Costs	£4,696	£4,082
Professional Expenses	£11,532	£14,330
Other	£1,612	£3,155
Total	£86,319	£112,879

Income	2023-2024	2024-2025
Grant Income	£77,097	£116,786
Donations	£2,737	£7,449
Sundry Income	£803	£2,393
Investment Income	£0	£771
Total	£80,637	£127,399

Accountants: During the year Derby Community Accountancy Service were appointed as Independent Examiners for The Farming Life Centre.

Independent examiner Mark Newey ACMA of Derby Community Accountancy will continue in office as independent examiner for the ensuing year.

What This Means for the Future

- Financially sustainable: The Charity is operating within its means and growing its reserves.
- Well-positioned for growth: Increased unrestricted funds allow for strategic development and innovation.
- Grant-dependent but efficient: Most income comes from charitable activities, showing strong community and funder support.

Looking Ahead...

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Looking Ahead: Farming Life Centre 2025–2026

The Farming Life Centre is entering 2025–2026 with a renewed sense of purpose and a growing portfolio of impactful projects designed to meet the evolving needs of rural communities in the Peak District. Building on the success of previous initiatives, the Charity is expanding its reach and deepening its support for farmers, older residents, and isolated individuals.

One of the flagship developments is the digital evolution of the Safe & Sound project, which will be supported by funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner. This next phase will harness digital tools to enhance rural safety, raise awareness of issues such as livestock worrying and agricultural theft, and provide accessible resources through an online Rural Resilience Toolkit. The digital platform will also support community engagement and training, making safety information more widely available and easier to act upon.

With funding from Rural Action Derbyshire, we are also launching the Digital Connections project, aimed at tackling digital exclusion in farming and rural communities. This initiative will provide training, support, and access to technology for individuals who may be digitally isolated, helping them connect with services, stay informed, and engage more fully with community life. The project will also explore how digital tools can enhance wellbeing and business resilience in rural settings.

In response to growing demand, the Charity will also expand its befriending services, with a particular focus on supporting individuals living with dementia. This will include tailored outreach, dementia-friendly activities, and increased coordination with local health and social care providers. The aim is to reduce isolation and improve wellbeing for some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

To support this growth, the Centre is investing in volunteer development, recognising the vital role volunteers play in delivering its services. Efforts will be made to recruit, train, and retain a diverse and committed volunteer base, ensuring that projects are sustainable and community-led. Volunteers will be supported to take on meaningful roles across befriending, social groups, events, and digital outreach.

“Farming is a canvas where dreams are painted.”



The Farming
Life Centre

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Meeting HRH King Charles



Peak Women in Ag



Thornbridge Hall

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