

Tamar Valley AONB Case Study – March 2022

Jeans Family Farm, Bohetherick, St Dominick Cornwall

Jess and Will Jeans farm 96 hectares of stunning Cornish countryside as tenants of National Trust Cotehele, within the Tamar Valley AONB.

Even before Farming in Protected Landscapes came into being they had already decided that to create a resilient livelihood for their young family they would need to diversify, so in addition to their core sheep and cattle operations they have developed on farm visitor accommodation, Alpaca trekking and direct sales of meat from heritage pigs. Alongside this Jess is passionate about the need to connect everyone to where the food they eat comes from through spending time on farms. She had found that the Alpaca trekking was already an enabler to this and so when Farming in Protected Landscapes came along she saw the opportunity to develop access to the farm further.

In October 2021 they applied for and were awarded a £22,000 Farming in Protected Landscapes grant towards their project which had a total cost of £24,000.

The objective of their project is to create a farm nature trail and interpretation centre to serve the community, facilitate access to the farmed landscape and to promote sustainable and climate friendly farming practices. Building on the existing natural capital on the farm the main objective is to increase the number of and add value to farm visits by schools, local interest groups and charities along with open access via the farm trails from the existing path network.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes grant has enabled Jess & Will to:

- Purchase 4 farm shelters which will allow them to create an engaging farm and landscape interpretation centre which tells the story of their farm in the context of farming within the Tamar Valley using oral histories from local residents. It will also provide education on regenerative farming techniques and the wildlife seen on the farm and provide spaces for groups to undertake activities and shelter when the Cornish rain sets in.
- Develop further their 1.5km farm trail which takes in various elements of their existing sustainable farming practices including a species rich wildflower meadow, woodland edge management, hedgerow management, multispecies herbal grassland and regenerative grazing practices.
- Extend their restored cherry orchard with further planting of local Tamar Valley cherry varieties to showcase the once thriving cherry industry locally.
- Plant nectar and pollinator strips in one of the fields to improve the habitat for insects and bees.
- Fence a permissive path, with stunning views, across their farm that connects the Cotehele main estate with other local footpaths as part of a wider plan with the National Trust to encourage visitors to venture further when they visit the area.

The vision is that the project will deliver an opportunity for people to engage with the landscape and farming practices in a new and unique way, from the perspective of the farmers who manage the land. Through open days, school visits and other events people will have the opportunity to come onto the farm to see farming and conservation in action. The result of the project will be more people accessing the farmland and engaging with local food production in a dynamic and interactive way. The farm interpretation centre will allow

year-round safe access for diverse groups to access the farm, the undercover interpretation areas will allow them to collaborate with other providers to run courses, host volunteer groups and charities. The importance of access to green space for health and wellbeing is well documented, as is the necessity for people to gain an insight into food production and what farmers are doing to meet the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and food security

The aim is for the centre to be used at least on a weekly basis by prebooked groups and for it also to be available to the public through regular open days. In the longer term the intention is to expand the project further to include greater access to local produce through a retail space.

The project is just completing the build and planting stages and will be fully up and running for summer 2022 so we are not able to report on outcomes as yet. Jess will be gathering feedback from visiting groups and doing species surveys in the new and enhanced habitats, so we look forward to sharing results towards the end of 2023.

One key learning from Jess regarding the project delivery is that gathering great stories and material for interpretation boards takes longer than you would imagine.



One of the Education Shelters



Stunning view from the newly fenced permissive path. The fence enables visitors to walk safely across the farm especially when the cows and new calves are in the field.



Pollinator and nectar strip site along the hedge



Existing visitor area alongside the Cherry Orchard and Alpacas