

A Tamar Valley AONB Case Study – April 2022

Tamar Grow Local, Demonstration Market Garden at Mill Acres Lane, Metherell

Tamar Grow Local (TGL) [Tamar Grow Local](#) is a thriving Community Interest Company (CIC) based in Kelly Bray just outside the Tamar Valley AONB. Through their community, education and commercial projects they draw on the heritage of market gardening in the Valley and underpin the local food system offering a market for small producers, developing horticultural skills and giving access to nutritious food for all.

With the support of FIPL funding and some match funding from the Tamara Landscape Project the TGL team have been able to get two significant projects underway.

Demonstration Market Garden

Drawing on their experience of managing allotments and offering 'Farm Start' small plots of land to new entrants the team wanted to develop a demonstration market garden to allow new and existing growers to learn field scale horticultural skills. At their Mill Acres Lane site near Metherell in Cornwall the joint FIPL and Tamara Landscape funding has allowed them to protect an acre plot from deer, install a polytunnel, purchase a variety of garden equipment and fund a 1 day per week caretaker for the site.

The site will also offer opportunities for volunteers to come and benefit from time working together outside to tend the soil and crops and develop their confidence and skills. The site will be open to new and existing volunteer groups, with a regular group of volunteers expected through the Tamara project and TGL's existing links.

The first crop that is being grown in the polytunnel is native Scabious which can then be sold as plug plants to go into wildflower meadows. Other future crops will either be sold and the profits re-invested in maintaining and developing the site or will be donated to TGL's Grow, Share, Cook initiative providing vegetable bags to low income or vulnerable people in the Plymouth area.

Small Scale Meadow Management Machinery

The Tamar Valley is still a landscape of small medieval fields, narrow gateways and lanes. This means that for many smaller farmers and landowners managing their grassland and meadows can be challenging as modern contractors drive very large tractors and are often too busy to be able to cut grass or hay when needed. The TGL team are passionate about meadow restoration and managing grassland to maximise diversity of plant and insect species.

Through their FIPL grant they have been able to buy a range of small-scale machinery including a brush harvester, a small round hay baler and tedder and a trailer for transporting them from farm to farm. These will be available to landowners and farmers via TGL and will allow them to manage their grassland more sensitively and to experiment with cutting at different times of the year which has been shown to improve diversity in meadows. The TGL team will track the usage and impact of this new approach with the landowners to see what results are achieved and ultimately hope to develop a number of wildflower seed sites

across the valley and be able to offer that seed to other local landowners to in turn restore their meadows.

The opportunity that the FIPL programme has provided to TGL has been extremely welcome as, due to their size, they are not able to qualify for other agricultural funding schemes. Thanks to their ability to connect and educate the funding will deliver benefit across all the FIPL themes of nature, climate, people and place.

