

Nature Friendly Farming in the Tamar Valley

Protecting Nature, Supporting Farmers, Strengthening Communities

What is Nature Friendly Farming?

Nature Friendly Farming is an approach that works with nature, not against it. It supports wildlife, improves soil and water health, and helps tackle climate resilience, all while producing food and supporting local livelihoods.

In the Tamar Valley National Landscape, over 65% of the land is farmland, making farming central to the health of the landscape and its communities. The Tamar Valley Landscape Partnership and Tamar Valley National Landscape team are working with farmers and landowners to integrate nature friendly farming practices into the everyday running of their business by; restoring hedgerows and wildflower meadows, improve soil and water quality across the catchment, support regenerative agriculture and sensitive agri-tech, connect people with nature through trails and volunteering, and celebrate the valley's rich heritage and scenic beauty.



Tamar Valley
National
Landscape





Tamar Valley National Landscape



Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

This national initiative, funded by Defra, supports farmers in protected areas like the Tamar Valley to deliver benefits for:

- Nature: Enhancing habitats and species
- Climate: Reducing emissions and adapting to change
- People: Improving health and access to nature
- Place: Strengthening local identity and economy.

The Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN)

is a UK-wide, farmer-led organisation championing sustainable agriculture that works in harmony with nature. It supports farmers in adopting practices that restore biodiversity, improve soil health, and build climate resilience, while still producing safe, nutritious food. Open to both farmers and the public, NFFN offers resources, training, and a vibrant community committed to shaping a future where farming and nature thrive together.



Tamara Landscape Partnership Projects

The Partnership is delivering 10 major projects, including:

- Nodal Farms: Demonstration farms sharing best practices
- Catchment-wide Planning: Coordinated land management for nature recovery
- Natural Capital Mapping: Tools to guide sustainable decisions.

The key practices of Nature-Friendly Farming

Protect Existing Habitats

Preserving habitats like species-rich grasslands, wetlands, woodlands, and hedgerows is the foundation of nature-friendly farming.

- **Why it matters:** These areas are reservoirs of biodiversity and soil health. They store carbon, regulate water, and provide refuge for pollinators and predators that support crop production.
- **Action:** Avoid ploughing or draining sensitive areas. Use low-impact grazing and manage woodlands for wildlife.



Tailor Conservation to Local Wildlife

Understanding which species are present or declining helps target conservation efforts effectively.

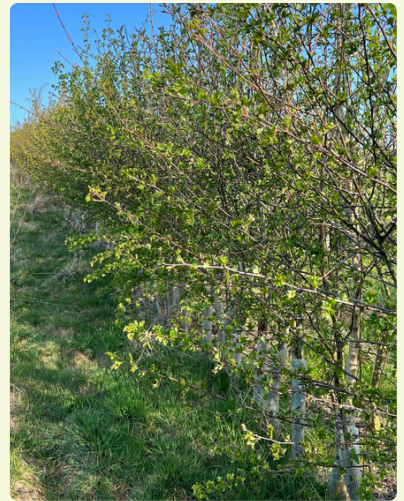
- **Why it matters:** Local wildlife needs specific habitats and food sources. Supporting them strengthens the farm's ecological network and soil life.
- **Action:** Use wildlife surveys, work with local conservation groups, and adapt management to support priority species.

These practices are most effective when combined across the whole farm and shared across landscapes. They not only improve soil health but also build resilience against climatic events, enhance biodiversity, and support sustainable food production.

Hedgerow Management, Planting & Restoration

Hedgerows are more than boundaries, they're lifelines for soil and biodiversity.

- **Soil Benefits:** Hedgerows reduce wind and water erosion, helping soil stay in place and retain moisture.
- **Biodiversity Boost:** They provide habitat and corridors for pollinators, bats, birds, and beneficial insects.
- **Carbon Storage:** Woody plants in hedgerows absorb carbon and improve soil organic matter.
- **Local Action:** Tamar Valley farms have restored thousands of kilometres of hedgerows using native species like Hawthorn, Blackthorn, and Hazel, reviving traditional field patterns and ecological networks.



Enhance Field Boundaries

Hedgerows, ditches, and buffer strips connect habitats and protect soil.

- **Why it matters:** Boundaries reduce erosion, trap nutrients, and provide corridors for wildlife. They also buffer fields from wind and water damage.
- **Action:** Plant native hedgerows, maintain ditches, and leave uncultivated margins around fields.

Restore Wet Features

Reinstating ponds, scrapes, and wet grasslands help manage water and supports amphibians, insects, and birds.

- Why it matters: Wet features reduce runoff, improve water quality by trapping nutrients and sediment, and recharge groundwater. They also create micro-habitats that boost soil moisture and resilience.
- Action: Create shallow scrapes, restore natural pond edges, and manage grazing around wet areas.

Water Management & Sediment Traps

Managing water flow is essential for soil protection.

- Sediment Ponds: Capture soil particles before they enter rivers, reducing pollution.
- “Slow the Flow” Systems: Leaky dams, swales, and bunds slow runoff, allowing water to soak into the ground.
- Flood Resilience: These systems reduce peak flows and protect downstream communities.
- Catchment Collaboration: Tamar Valley farmers, landowners, and conservation groups are working together to install natural flood management features across the valley.



Cover Cropping & Rotations

Cover crops are grown between main crops to protect and enrich the soil.

- **Erosion Control:** Their roots hold soil in place during wet months.
- **Soil Enrichment:** Legumes like clover fix nitrogen, while deep-rooted plants like radish break up compacted layers.
- **Microbial Life:** Diverse rotations feed soil microbes and reduce disease cycles.
- **Farm Resilience:** Tamar Valley farmers are growing and exploring the impact of multi-species cover crops to improve soil structure and reduce input costs.



Flower-Rich Habitats

Wildflower meadows, field margins and buffer strips provide nectar and pollen for insects and birds.

Why it matters: Flower-rich areas support pollinators and beneficial insects that improve crop yields and soil biodiversity. Their roots also stabilise soil, improve structure and reduce soil runoff.

Action: Sow native wildflower mixes, manage grazing and mowing regimes, and connect habitats across the farm.

Landscape Connectivity: Tamar farms are linking margins to hedgerows and woodlands, creating wildlife corridors across the catchment.

Trees on Farms

Integrating trees through wood pasture, agroforestry, and field-edge planting supports wildlife, improves soil and water health, and helps farms adapt to be climate resilient.

Why it matters: Trees provide shade and shelter for livestock, reduce erosion, and store carbon. Many species offer nutritious forage and produce fruit and nuts, creating opportunities for alternative income and local food production.

Action: Plant native trees in pasture and margins, explore agroforestry systems, use tree forage to supplement livestock diets, and harvest fruit and nuts. Together, these practices build healthier, more sustainable farming landscapes.



Provide Seed-Rich Areas

Growing crops, leaving stubble and annual growth on hedges produces seeds, nuts and berries which help farmland birds and small mammals survive through winter.

- Why it matters: Birds like linnets and skylarks rely on seed-rich habitats. Their presence indicates a healthy farm ecosystem.
- Action: Leave overwintered stubbles, grow conservation headlands, or plant dedicated bird food plots. Introduce incremental and biannual hedge cutting on farm. Blossom and berries grow on the second years growth of many of our native tree and hedging species.

Protecting the Ground Beneath Our Feet

Why Soil Matters: Healthy soil is the foundation of life. It supports biodiversity, stores carbon, filters water, and grows the food we eat. In the Tamar Valley, our soils are part of a rich landscape of hedgerows, meadows, woodlands, and farmland, each playing a vital role in climate resilience and nature recovery.

What Is Soil Health & Resilience?

- Soil Health refers to the soil's ability to function as a living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans.
- Resilience means soil can recover from stress, like drought, flooding, or pollution, and continue to support life.

Healthy soils are rich in organic matter, teeming with microbes, and structured to retain water and nutrients. Resilient soils help buffer climate extremes and support thriving ecosystems.



Reduced Tillage & Sward Lifting

Traditional ploughing can damage soil structure and life. These techniques offer a gentler approach:

- **Reduced Tillage:** Minimising soil disturbance preserves fungal networks and organic matter.
- **Sward Lifting:** This mechanical method lifts compacted grassland soils without inverting them, improving drainage and root growth.
- **Benefits:** Better water infiltration, less runoff, and healthier pasture.
- **Local Impact:** Tamar Valley farms using these methods report improved soil resilience and reduced machinery costs.

Get Involved: Whether you're a farmer, landowner, resident, or visitor, you can help shape a greener future for the Tamar Valley.

Learn more: www.tamarvalley-nl.org.uk

Explore projects: www.tamarlandscapepartnership.org.uk

Local and Regional Partners, Organisations and Advise Networks

Nature Friendly Farming Network - <https://www.nffn.org.uk/>

Farm Carbon Toolkit - <https://farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk/>

Devon Hedge Group - <https://devonhedges.org/>

Forest for Cornwall - <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/countryside/forest-for-cornwall-programme/>

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest - <https://psdcf.com/>

Environment Agency - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>

Westcountry Rivers Trust - <https://wrt.org.uk/>

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group - <https://www.fwag.org.uk/about-fwag>

Woodland Trust - <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>



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