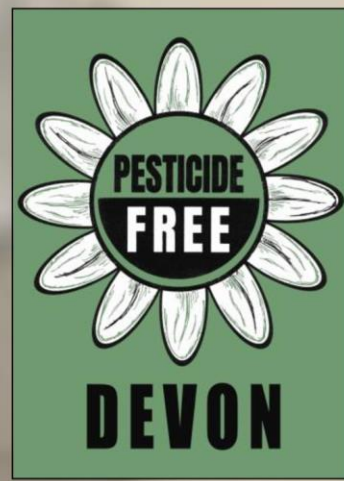


The Pesticide-Free Devon Conference & Gathering

Saturday 7th June 2025



Feedback Report

The Pesticide – Free Devon Conference and Gathering Report

7th of June 2025



Overview

On Saturday 7th of June 2025 110 people, representing a wide range of different groups and organisations from across Devon, met at the Courtenay Centre in Newton Abbot to explore the idea of “A Pesticide-Free Devon”. The atmosphere throughout the whole day was one of positivity and enthusiasm to work together and find practical solutions to reduce pesticide use in agriculture, municipal and private land management and in homes and gardens across Devon. The following report is a summary of the different elements of the day :

- Key Speeches
- Question and Answer Session
- Workshops
- Plenary Session
- Summary of Key Outcomes

There is more information, including films of all the Key Speeches and the Q&A Session on the Pesticide – Free Devon website (www.pesticidefreedevon.co.uk).

Reviewing the day again, through watching all the films, reading all the flipcharts and seeing some of the photos has, for me, been incredibly inspiring. There is a lot of useful information here, but crucially, it feels like there was a huge amount of inspiration from everyone who was there and a strong sense of motivation to take the steps forward to move closer to our goal of helping Devon to become pesticide-free.

Acknowledgements

We would to take this opportunity to thank Devon Environment Foundation who very generously provided most of the grant funding without which the Conference would not have been able to happen and to Newton Abbot Town Council for their invaluable core funding support for Green

What Motivated Us to Be Here?

Support behavioural change
I - individuals
S - social
M - materials.

MAKE THE WORLD
FOR A BRIGHTER
FUTURE - ONE STEP AT A TIME
Molly May

To think about
what my
organisation
can do.

My Children
and Grandchildren

The health
of our
wildlife

The health of the
world's future children,
of my grandchildren

To learn what
we can do to
leave the world a
better place for
our grandchildren.

To learn about
alternatives &
how to encourage/
establish sustainable
practices

TO SUPPORT
PARENTS TO
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE

future generations
to protect thriving life

To be a family
to be a family
to be a family
to be a family

TO LEARN HOW
TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
MEET LIKE
UNDER PEOPLE

Help Horizon residents
understand why the council
banned pyrethroids April 2012

Connect with others trying
to protect & enhance our little
corners of the planet - swap ideas,
get tips & have an energy boost
being with you all @ together
we can do this!

Love for insects

As a Tax Collector
to be a better person
when I meet people in
help

Some here
(Ruan Clark)

To be part of
positive change
and a way to reverse
the decline of insects.

We are from the
Rural community
cannot and have
come to learn so
we can support rural
community interested
in wildlife + climate
change

To see the world
top of individuals in
the world of a better
To see the world of a better
To see the world of a better
To see the world of a better

Also and
at the heart of
nature and animals

Because it's really
about trying to
make positive changes
on your own

To help prevent the
decline in biodiversity
loss of many of our
species

I come to help people understand
how the world is working
for them & the environment across
South Devon

There was a wide range of motivation for attending the Conference, including :

"The health of the world's future children and my Grandchildren"

"To see the build-up of pesticides in the comb of a beehive...in the womb of the hive....to see the damage to the baby bees hatching...A mirror to our health...Why wouldn't I come!"

"To support farmers to make a difference"

"Support behavioural change – Individual, Social, Materials"

"As a Town Councillor to learn what this is all about and take away information that I have learned."

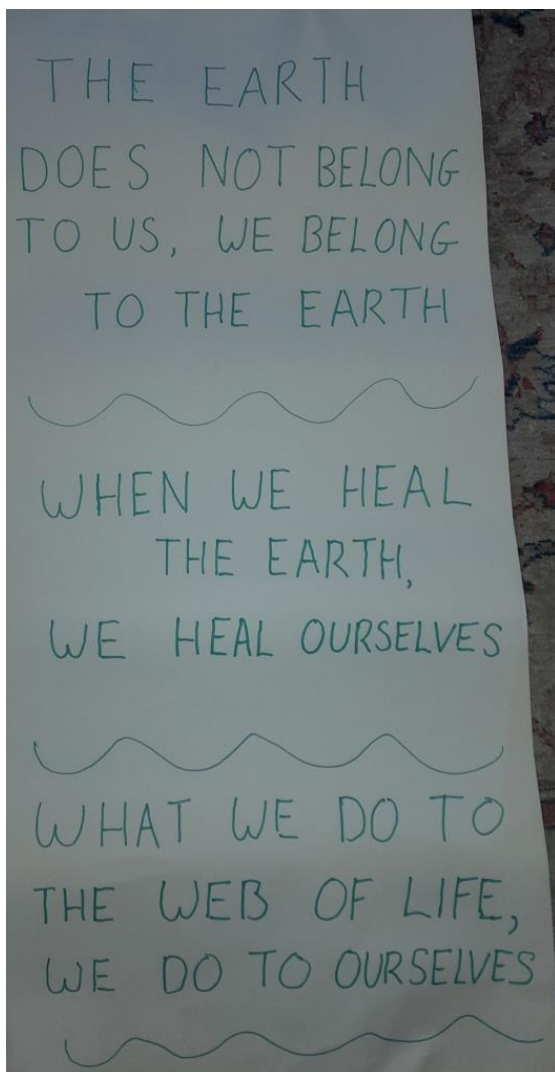
"Because it's really tough trying to make positive changes on your own."

"The health of our wildlife"

"To think about what our organisation can do"

"Love for insects"

And inspiring quotes from Chief Seattle and Gandhi:



THE EARTH
DOES NOT BELONG
TO US, WE BELONG
TO THE EARTH

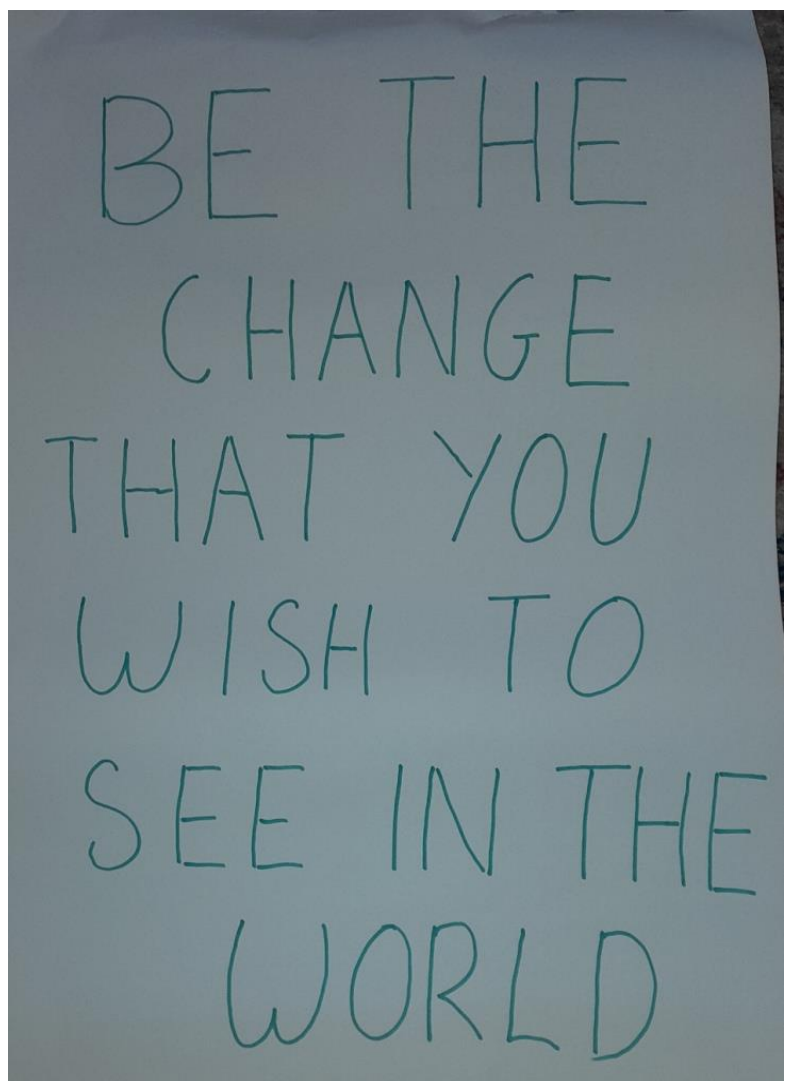
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WHEN WE HEAL  
THE EARTH,  
WE HEAL OURSELVES

~~~~~

WHAT WE DO TO
THE WEB OF LIFE,
WE DO TO OURSELVES

~~~~~



BE THE  
CHANGE  
THAT YOU  
WISH TO  
SEE IN THE  
WORLD

# Welcome to the Conference

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## **Andrew Rothery – Conference Organiser Green Futures Newton Abbot** [\(Watch the Film\)](#)

Andrew welcomed participants to the Conference and thanked everyone who had helped with the organisation of the event, the key speakers and Devon Environment Foundation and Newton Abbot Town Council for their financial support. He also thanked the participants for coming "The call went out, and you answered the call!".

Andrew talked about his motivation for organising the Conference being related to hearing about a farmer who had watched a hare get covered by the pesticides that he was spraying and he realised how much damage he was causing to nature and to himself. That farmer is now organic.

## **Professor Dave Goulson – Sussex University and Founder of the Bumblebee Trust**



Dave very kindly sent the Conference a personal welcome message recorded on video. Dave shared that he had spent the last 30 years studying bumblebees and learning how we can help stop their concerning decline in population. Dave identified pesticide use in farming and gardening as one of the major factors. "I don't understand why we do it" Dave said. He's been gardening and growing vegetables for the last 20 years without using pesticides.

"We don't need pesticides in our gardens, in our streets in our parks. We don't need them in farming. Why would we spray poison on the stuff we're planning to eat. Its absolutely bonkers!"

A Pesticide-Free Devon is a really exciting vision “Wouldn’t that be amazing” Dave said , and hoped that we all “Have a wonderful day”.

## Key Speeches

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All the key speeches are available to watch on the Pesticide-Free Devon website.



### **Amanda Keetley – Executive Director of Devon Environment Foundation** ([Watch the Film](#))

- We’re all here because we have shared commitment to see a reduction in pesticides.
- Healthier pollinators, rivers, soils, oceans and people.
- Purpose of today is to understand the impacts of pesticides but not to be overwhelmed.
- To take action together is really empowering and gives us hope.
- Get the information on alternatives out there.
- DEF supports grassroots projects across Devon with grant funding.
- Grassroots is where the real change happens and policymakers take note.
- Importance of building relationships with people – talking and listening.
- Conference is an opportunity to learn from each other and inspire each other.
- Let’s make today a starting point for a bigger process.



### **Martin Wrigley – M.P. for Newton Abbot** ([Watch the Film](#))

- Fantastic to see so many people today

- It's clear that climate change and biodiversity loss is an existential problem for humanity.
- Every change starts with small steps.
- Local Councils are making positive changes – banning neonicotinoids, investing in alternatives to pesticide use for street cleaning.
- Farmers are having a really hard time – many pressures due to removal of subsidies, so gradual change is needed that supports farmers.
- Demonstrator dressing up as a bee outside DEFRA – if we lose our pollinators, we lose our food supply.
- EU Target of reducing harm from pesticides by 50% by 2030 – a good start.
- Pesticides cost us more in net financial terms than they save.
- Integrated Pest Management as an approach is relevant.
- Talking to farmers about biodiversity and regenerative farming.
- Going back to the lessons that our ancestors knew about land management.
- Encourage Devon County Council to ban glyphosate before we engage with farmers.
- Food and farming is key to our future.
- Keep up the good work and change will come through the network.



### **Guy Singh-Watson – Riverford Organic Farmers** [\(Watch the Film\)](#)

- Looking at broader environmental impacts of farming in Devon and East Africa
- Been growing vegetables for over 40 years – much produce still harvested by hand.
- Riverford does not use any pesticides – no herbicides, no fungicides
- Experimented with using soap to control aphids
- Trying to farm in partnership with nature
- Aiming to maintain diversity in hedgerows – lacewings and hoverfly larvae eat aphids on crops
- Don't even use soap any more because it kills the larvae and rare to see aphids at problem levels.
- We've solved all predation problems on the farm – no issues with slugs, carrot fly and fungus.
- The key factor is to look after the soil – encourage mycorrhizae
- As a wealthier farmer I can farm in a more intimate way with nature because there's less need to be commercial
- How you look after the soil is now the most important issue.
- Perennial crops are very important – no cultivation of the soil so no risk of soil loss
- South Devon Organic Producers – we need to look after our small and medium –sized farms
- Harvesting wild garlic from local woodland – for over 20 years, so sustainable.
- Historically we have cut down much of our native woodland to make way for agricultural growing land, so we need to be more humble when criticising other countries for plantations like palm oil.
- Agriculture needs to become more integrated into the wider ecosystem.

- Letting weeds grow in empty rows is often more effective than companion planting because it allows a population of aphids to exist all year which ensures that the predatory insects are maintained on site as well so they're available to predate aphids on your crop.
- Most UK farmers aren't able to identify natural predators in their fields and the agri-chemical suppliers will visit farms and advise on spraying.
- There is generally no counting of natural predators on UK farms.
- The term Integrated Pest Management will be used by UK farmers, but it doesn't really mean much in reality.
- Ripple Effect Charity in East Africa – working with subsistence farmers who have a very good understanding of their local ecology.
- They have developed their own pest management techniques that work, but they're not being sold any chemicals.
- When chemical companies aren't pushing chemicals onto farmers, they create their own chemical-free solutions.
- These African farmers are being pushed down the agro-chemical route, to use fertilizers and pesticides and it's a terrifying prospect of intensive large-scale farming spreading across Africa.
- British farmers are often spraying with glyphosate to clear weeds and then ploughing which disrupts the soil structure. Then seeds sown with non-compostable plastic which breaks down into micro-plastics.
- Rains are failing in sub-Saharan Africa due to climate change that we have caused in the West.
- I've learned more from these African farmers than I've ever been able to teach them.
- Agroforestry is becoming more important – planted 50 acres of nut trees on local farm.
- Riverford carbon footprint as a way of understanding our impact on the environment – difficult to achieve carbon neutrality.
- Burning fossil fuels is the key factor driving climate change and they need to be made more expensive using a Carbon Tax.
- Global carbon emissions are still going up exponentially.
- Social change is integral to environmental change.
- Sceptical of conventional capitalist models ability to solve our problems.
- Carbon offsetting is very questionable.
- Create flatter, employee-owned structures which share profits.
- We all need to live modestly.

## Question and Answer Panel

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**With Guy, Martin and Amanda** [\(Watch the Film\)](#)

The whole Q&A Session is available to watch on the Pesticide-Free Devon website.

## **Q1 What is the evidence for biodiversity [net gain] groups being “a bunch of charlatans”?**

### **Guy**

- Putting a monetary value on nature and trading it begs the question who owns it in the first place.
- I have a real problem with biodiversity net gain as a concept – I’ve asked many proponents to explain how it works and I’ve never been given a satisfactory answer.
- The idea that you can reduce our complex ecosystem into simple elements that can then be traded is ludicrous.
- I know farmers who are running their farm’s biodiversity down to such a low level that they can then receive subsidies to restore it.
- Market forces know only one measure – money and nature is more complex

### **Martin**

- Markets are not the solution to everything.
- Even Adam Smith said that markets have a limited use.
- Read stories about emissions offsets that have not delivered.
- I don’t use them because I don’t trust them.
- Need to look at the tax on fossil fuels.

### **Amanda**

- In terms of biodiversity net gain its always better to protect what you’ve got rather than restore it elsewhere.
- Why only 10% uplift – if you destroy nature you need to make up for it in a bigger way.

## **Q2 How can we take the well-established knowledge of living pesticide-free out into the mainstream?**

### **Martin**

- Get away from the message of the supermarkets that our food needs to look “perfect”.
- Buy in season, buy organic, buy local
- Push people like me – write to your M.P. and other people in positions of responsibility
- Climate and Nature Bill being taken through parliament.
- Consumer power is important

### **Amanda**

- Its up to all of us to work out our place in communicating this.
- We all have voices in our family, in our community, in local businesses.

### **Guy**

- For me personally, the day that changed my life was walking my farm with Anna and Lynne from Devon Wildlife Trust showing me the riches beneath my feet – very humbling.
- Money matters – farmers are pretty cash-strapped, so commercial drivers are important, but we’re not rational beings, so appealing to our feelings is important.
- Learning to love what’s under your feet is the single most valuable thing we can do.
- We need to be smarter in designing subsidies for farmers that work for farmers and nature.
- Supermarket buying practices are largely responsible for many of the currently environmentally damaging farming practices in the UK today.

## **Q3. What does the panel think about the use of glyphosate?**

### **Guy**

- The reality of planting substantial areas of woodland without glyphosate is very very difficult.
- Dogmatism is rarely the right answer
- could use 95% less glyphosate and no one would notice.

- Everyone has glyphosate in their body.
- Trivial gains from using glyphosate for farmers

### **Nick Mole (PAN UK)**

- UK coming into line with EU legislation around using glyphosate as a pre-harvest desiccant
- Dynamic alignment with the EU generally around reducing pesticide use in the UK
- The pre-harvest desiccant use had increased glyphosate use in the UK by 900%

### **Guy**

- Regenerative farming is NOT the same as Organic! Because people are using glyphosate.
- Promoted as a solution by a range of companies and retains the use of glyphosate.
- Should always ask people what they mean by regenerative.

## **Q4. Could Devon go pesticide-free ?**

### **Martin**

- Love it as an ambition
- Can't be done tomorrow
- How long will it take?
- Farmers will take time to learn pesticide-free techniques
- Councils will take time to remove certain uses

### **Amanda**

- We need to have ambitious visions that set a standard so we have a direction to point ourselves towards.
- If we can do it in lots of small places, this will add up to bigger action
- Communicate between us the alternatives – how did we manage before the chemicals came along.
- Aspire to be pesticide-free, be happy with all progress.

### **Guy**

- Most of Devon is grassland – and I can see this going pesticide-free quite easily by switching away from maize to alternative feed crops.
- Arable is going to be much harder – how do we replace the cheap grain feed for hens and pigs?

### **Betina Winkler (Action Climate Teignbridge)**

- A lot of pesticides are in use to maintain animal health on farms, so this is another area that needs to be looked at.

### **Andrew Rothery (Green Futures Newton Abbot)**

- It sounds like we have more questions than answers at the moment
- To have the aspiration to go pesticide-free is positive.
- We need to be spending more time looking at answering these questions.

## **Q5. How long did it take Guy to go from being non-organic to organic?**

### **Guy**

- I've been organic for over 40 years.
- I would have learned quicker if I'd been surrounded by other organic growers.
- Estimate around 3 years to go through the transition
- One initial problem will be slugs and weeds – year 2 can be very difficult.
- Certain species will dominate e.g. dandelions during the transitional process
- It does get easier with time.

# Workshop Outcomes

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## **Pesticides and Health**

**with Nick Mole from Pesticide Action Network UK and Brian Robson-Burrell from Green Futures Newton Abbot**

### **Morning Session**

- Educate yourself
- Change what you buy
- Parish Council Newsletters to create awareness
- Personal responsibility - Look at what products you're using that may contain pesticides and end up in our waterways.
- Petitions from local people
- You have the power to make change – don't give up.

### **Afternoon Session**

- Gorilla Actions
- Conversations
- "Pesticides" not individual chemicals
- Education in our schools
- Looking backwards to look forward
- Go to P.A.N. UK for campaign materials

## **Human-Scale Food Production**

**With Jo Clark from Oxen Park Farm and Lucy Wiltshire from Green Futures Devon CIC**

### **Morning Session**

- How to change the [our] view of food production
- Learning from elders to manage the land
- Help people (especially youth) learn how to reconnect with the land & food production
  - Helping Kids actively engage with land
  - Teaching these lessons in schools
- Engage consumers & educate about organic
- Bring back gratitude towards food
- Lower the barrier of entry to Organic food
- Explore the potential of marketing nutrient-rich products
- Grow back our community connections - get people in different groups involved together
- Use the PFD network to connect all the groups who are already in action/
  - Inspire kids – get allotment spaces in Schools
- More volunteers going into schools
- Change peoples' (especially kids) thoughts on pests.

### **Afternoon Session**

- Linking growers and producers and the communities that are already pesticide-free
- Publish a list of organic food producers locally
- Inspire people to be supportive of bio-diverse growers.
- Show people organic alternatives
- More multi-land use
- Inspire kids – get schools involved
- Allotment spaces on schools
- More volunteers going into schools.
- Change peoples (especially children's)

thoughts on "pests"

# **Pesticides and Biodiversity**

**With Phil Sansum from Devon Biodiversity Records Centre and Cathy Horsley from Devon Wildlife Trust**

## **Morning Session**

- Cost / Benefit - do we have enough information?
- Will we ever know the full picture?
- Communication issues of chemical-free approach / education / historical knowledge
- Pet treatments - overkill of regular dosing
- Labelling & awareness of harm - pets -health warnings- garden centres
- Commercially-driven process that's not kept pace with science
- eg non-target, cocktail effects
- Role of Citizen Science
- Consumer choice – education and affordability

### **Action Points:**

- Alliance with Garden Centres
- Paragraph in Parish Newsletters – impacts / actions
- Working Group
- Central place on internet for signposting
- Research

## **Afternoon Session**

- Evidence-based pesticide use vs precautionary principle
- Occasional use on Non Native Species in Conservation
- Society forced to find alternatives if we couldn't use pesticides. Necessity mother of invention
- Controlled use in organic for animal welfare - Could this be more widely adopted?
- Shift to using less wormers - testing instead because of resistance, forced to use less.

### **Flea treatments**

- Vets starting to engage
- "Vets Sustain"
- Monthly treatments pushed by vets
- Alarming lack of insects in environment eg flies and white butterflies
- Importance of decomposers & pollinators

### **Farming**

- Immunity /resistance to treatments
- Use when needed rather than regular dosing.
- Driven by cost, time & stress of moving stock - faecal egg counts
- Animal welfare priorities
- Small steps to be able to achieve vision
- Fear factor around profit loss Farming can be isolating, difficult to make changes on own
- Farmers need support
- -Farmer dusters - peer to peer support
- Look at healthy soils
- Learning on the ground, with support, to make changes.
- Treat with vermicide- then give them a sacrificial field to excrete onto, keep rest of farm clear.
- Medicinal field with herbs.
- Tailored advice needed.
- Scale of farm a factor in willingness to try alternatives.
- Dung beetle recording success with farmers

- Make farmers proud of their wildlife.
- Access to land.
- Make connections between farmers & volunteers e.g. free tree planting event.
- Avoid conflicting opinion
- "dating agencies" for farmers & community recorders Eg farmers vs smaller farms
- Wildlife wardens go onto farms for bioblitzes.
- Avoid contentious issues, areas where farmers can save money.
- Local introductions by someone working with them already.
- Naming –alienating....how do we understand what's out there? Different farms

## **Secondary Effects of Pesticides**

- Flea treatments in water impact on invertebrates
- Lack of awareness by general public
- Dave Goulson has video on flea treatment impacts
- What are the alternatives?
- Confidence to try these alternatives & £investment

## **Data**

- Could we use data to look at impacts?
- Is there enough data?
- Will it then change attitudes & actions?
- Emulate successful organic businesses

## **General**

- Legislative change makes the difference
- Ground-up not top down
- Funding secured through data
- What about animals going into human food chain?

## **How can communities help?**

- iRecord
- iNaturalist
- Citizen science programmes - big butterfly count, regular transects

## **Alternatives to Pesticides**

**With Tim Callard and Steve Garlick from Newton Abbot and District Co-operative Allotment Association**

## **Morning Session**

- Use diluted milk as an alternative to pesticides.
- Create a biodiverse garden or plot to maintain balance.
- Work with nature and encourage beneficial insects and amphibians.
- Implement no-dig and mulching techniques.
- Focus on changing mindsets regarding pest management.

## **Key threats to plants**

- |                |                |             |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| • Flea beetle  | • Caterpillars | • Squirrels |
| • Rabbits      | • Whitefly     | • Mice      |
| • Slugs/snails | • Pheasants    |             |
| • Blackfly     | • Pigeons      |             |

## **Afternoon Session**

- Create a vibrant soil (nurture) eg no dig
- Encourage [natural] predators

- Mix and match – companion planting
- Live and let live!

## Role of Government

**With Jo Rice Senior Casework Team Leader to Martin Wrigley M.P., Teignbridge District and Newton Abbot Town Councillor Richard Buscombe and Newton Abbot Town Council Green Spaces Officer, Thomas Collard**

## Morning Session

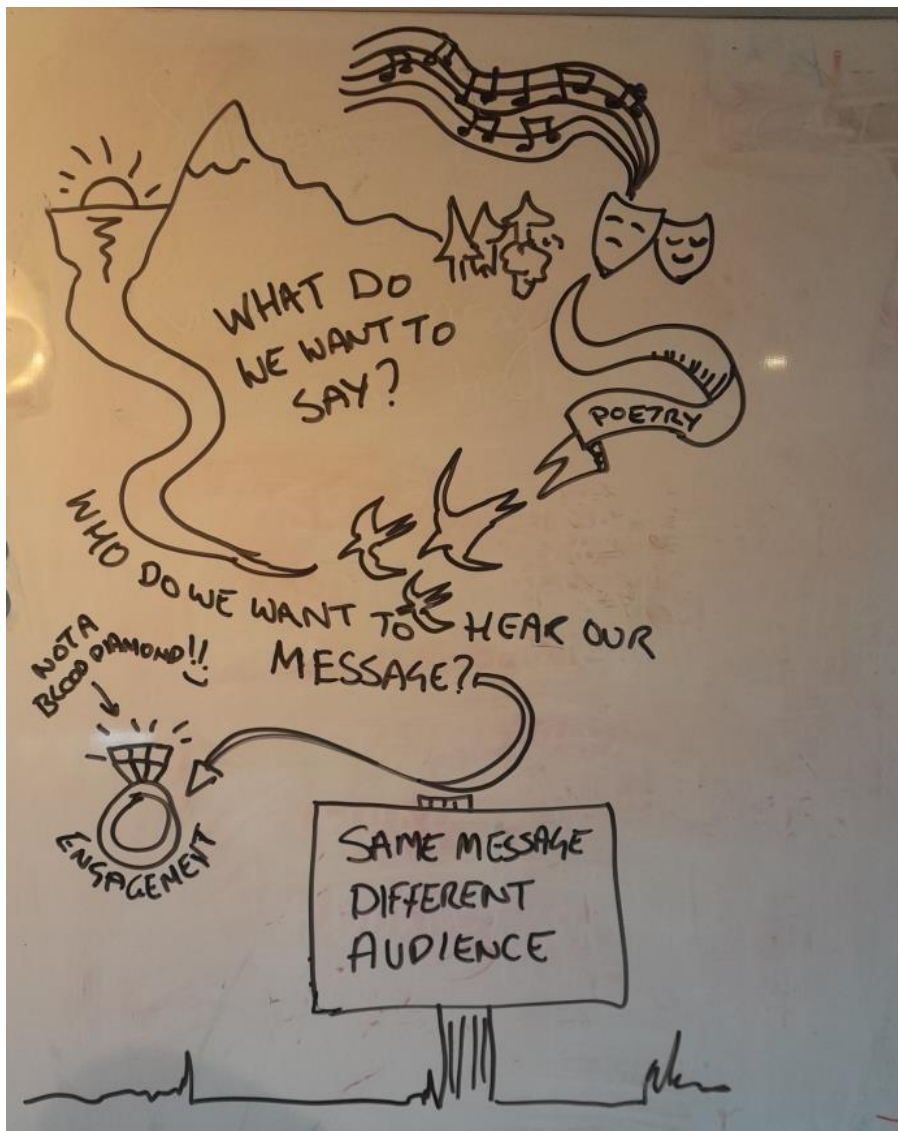
- Talk to Councillors
- Community Engagement
- Costs
- Organise in the Community – Be Activists

## Afternoon Session

- Local
- Competition
- Make the changes obvious

## Role of the Arts

**With Simon Heath, Ecotherapist and Graphic Designer**



Some key points from the Morning and Afternoon workshops:

- Who is the message for?
- Who is our audience?
- How do you convey your message? Is it with Theatre, Poetry , Music?
- The "Arts" is part of a wider exploration of "CREATIVITY".
- Some people said "I don't know where to start" and "I'm not creative".
- This is not just about Marketing, it's about Project Development
- Easier to communicate with people who you know, harder to convey messages to people you don't know.
- Creativity provides Originality

## **Landscape – Scale Food Production**

**With Roger English from South Devon National Landscape and Andy Bragg from West Town Farm**

### **Morning Session**

Roger began by outlining the work of South Devon National Landscape.

#### **3 Different Landowner Relationships with Pesticide-Free Approach**

- There is a split between farmers and landowners who have adopted pesticide-free / organic approaches and those who haven't.
- In the South Devon National Landscape Area (SDNL) :
  - 1/3 are Adopters.....tend to be those who have dabbled in organic
  - 1/3 are Late Adopters – eg regenerative agriculture, cautious....but will go into the sphere
  - 1/3 are Not Engaging – but in important strategic areas....complex reasons for struggling to engage.
- We need to bring them all along with us.
- With the data and intelligence that SDNL has about its area of operation we're able to build bespoke programmes for farmers and landowners.
- SDNL has a lot of experience of Countryside Stewardship scheme delivery – so we have a trusted partner and honest broker role.

#### **Complex Landscape Characteristics in the South Devon Area**

- The SDNL area has complex landscape characteristics – open coastal plateau and inland undulating hills divided by rivers
- There are Land owners who live within the SDNL area and around the edges of it as well.
- Transhumance – hundreds of years ago the coastline was where people lived – winter by the sea and summer up on the moor – so a migratory system and way of life between coast and moor is ingrained into the culture of the area.

- National Landscape Management Plan
- Nature – Climate – People and Place
- Pesticide usage has an impact on all these elements.
- Land-use patterns
  - Little grade 1 Agri
  - 10% grade 2
  - 80% grade 3
- Grade determines land value and potential limitations to what you can do on the land.
- This has an impact on soil quality and soil management.

## **Farming Practices**

- Historically Mixed farming – Devon Cattle – does well....
- Seen a push for specialisation on farms in terms of livestock - this encourages greater use of pesticides and fertilizers – limits the ability to integrate into the seasonal cycle.
- An example is the shift away from small mixed farms with lots of rotation towards Dairy, Arable.
- So this has been driven by subsidies based on productivity rather than soil quality.
- Farm Type Statistics for Devon (2023) :
  - 36% Livestock
  - 21% Cereals
  - 17% Dairy
  - 12% General Cropping
  - 11% Mixed
  - 3% Pigs, Poultry and Other
- Why are farms using pesticides.....
  - E.g. Farm next to a SSSI
  - Change of ownership within a family can make a significant difference to approach.
- We need to question the use of pesticides as a convention.
- Agricultural systems where nature , recreation, water resources
  - E.g. Life on the Edge – Talking about the insects and invertebrates story has been integral to change.
- Hard-nosed businesses whose approach has been softened and changed.

## **Andy's Presentation**

Andy began by explaining about his farm and his farming career. Starting in 1982 as a dairy farmer and then moving to beef in 2006. Having achieved organic status in 1992 he has been producing pesticide-free food since then – mainly beef cattle and squash.

West Town Farm is mainly pasture – grassland, herbs and weeds). We have also diversified to include a Farm Shop, that is a hub for a local network of other organic food producers. We also have other ventures such as educational visits, shepherds hut, camping and weddings, to keep a marginal farm business in profit.

Consumers also need to be thinking about purchasing their food from organic food producers or pesticide-free producers. Even if it's a small amount of their weekly shop, it all helps the farmers and to get the message out there to more people.

As far as mainstream farming is concerned and changing the way that conventional or non-organic farmers work, here are some tips:

- Support government environmental schemes that are in place such as the Landscape Recovery and Sustainable Farming Initiative.
- Support organisations that are calling for a ban on pesticide use e.g. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, PAN UK and the Nature Friendly Farmer Network.

## **Morning Workshop Outcomes**

Instigated by Andy talking about his training

1. Training is still extremely conventional – so pesticide use is baked in. We need to engage with the Agricultural Colleges:

Royal College of Agriculture at Cirencester  
Bicton  
Harper Adams  
Rittel in Essex

2.. Importance of knowledge share – opportunities that farmers in South Devon were afforded compared to farmers outside of the National Landscape.

3. Production –focused groups e.g. Arla

4. How to raise public consciousness of Local Food  
Food hubs – South Devon Food Hub – Dennis Family diversification Sharpham Cheese ,  
demonstration kitchens  
Local markets  
Recognising that many of the answers are held within the Organic Farming system.  
Regenerative – herbal leys, clovers – borrow from the organic system.

Role of Regulation – Soil Association requirement perspective – could DEFRA take on some of these elements.

## **Afternoon Session**

1.Role of County Farms – the route to get into farming is very difficult – So making County Farms pesticide-free could help.

2.National Trust Tenancies as well

3. Make significant headway on one Estate e.g. Fleete Estate change of hands made tenancies use of pesticides written out.

4. Creating opportunities for farmer and public interaction – through events..... There has been an uptick in local food sales. More than open farm Sunday.

5. What does resilience look like? Resilience within the political, economic and environmental climate – Diversification. It means considering your input costs. Moving away from chemicals and reducing multiple tractor passes could save money. A Mindset shift

## **Community Pesticide Collections**

**With Anita Gorst and Andrew Rothery from Green Futures Newton Abbot**

### **Morning Session**

Wider South Hams Project – Pilot communities

Listening – Visioning

Give people a structure for collecting pesticides

South Hams pesticide collection?

Create a Community Template

Devon Wildlife Trust – Action for Insects

We need more money!

### **Afternoon Session**

#### **General**

- Making information more human – Qualitative data + Narrative
- Where do we start? (Actually we've started in Moretonhampstead with one beehive in the Churchyard)
- Start Small
- How useful are the Household Recycling Centres for collecting Hazardous waste
- Work with Retailers
- Inform people of the impacts of pesticides.

#### **Creating Community**

- Talking points
- Seeing something happening
- Raising questions

## **Plenary Session Outcomes**

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### **Green Group**

PESTICIDE FREE DEVON

1. Good idea
2. **Connections + Networking – Priority Action**
3. Food

4. Staying in touch / sharing
5. Becoming an Entity / CIC / Charity?
6. Steering Group and Committee:
  - Landowners
  - Businesses
  - Community Groups
  - Local government
  - NGO's
  - Education
  - Community Shops
7. Resources – Tracking of Progress – IT and Printed Info packs / flyers
8. Defining objectives – vision / mission statement
9. Raising awareness – Painting a potential picture
10. Ambassadors – today's participants
11. ID Logo badge

Connections / Sharing :

- Knowledge
- Resources
- Anecdotes
- Inspirations
- Expertise
- Staying in touch (How?)

## Orange Group

### ACTIONS

1. Use milk to control mildew
2. Start re-educating the young
3. Pesticide Action Network has resources for using in our own town and village groups
4. Personal targets e.g. talking to one other person
5. **Learn to communicate with other communities with opposing views – Enthusiasm – telling a story of success – PRIORITY ACTION**
6. Wildlife recording
7. Collective actions and individual actions
8. Approach local Councils for their policy
9. Conversations / engagement with garden centres – pilot trial – could Wildlife Wardens get involved?
10. Speak to local councillors to go pesticide-free e.g. in East Devon
11. Article in all the local parish magazines.
12. Press release.
13. **Recording**
14. Water quality monitoring
  - Record/iNaturalist
  - Bat surveys
  - Set up new wild life wardens

15. Helping farmers to access funds eg fecal egg counts & fewer wormers  
Help farmers celebrate what species they have

## 16. Churchyard management

Volunteer involvement

Interpretation boards to explain not abandoned/disrespectful but for wildlife

## Council-owned farms (69 in Devon)

17. Tennants on short-leases

Need incentives to look after the farm

eg looking after the soil

-Need support and mentoring & time to go organic, & learning

## Councils

18. Written policies in each council on pesticides use – not all Councils have one

19. Co-ordinated effort across Devon for more impact

## Blue Group

Actions we will take away from today:

1. Increase Peer Support & Networking
2. Engagement. Needs more encouragement.
3. Indoor Market to Create a Local food hub.
4. Talk to your Local Council & also your MP to “let your voice be heard”!  
How do we address the issues of pesticides too small label, too little information on supermarket food.
5. Encourage locally-sourced food
6. Awareness of the effects of these pesticides “Eco-warning” on commercial and domestic products.
7. Awareness of eco-interconnectedness of the insects – Small World – life that we humans really need.
8. Converse with people about the alternatives
9. Share information – positive and negative
- 10 **Flagship a species so as to highlight positive support – maybe as a “logo” to simplify the message**
10. Finding what really matters to people
11. More spaces free of Pesticides

The time flew by 😊

## Yellow Group

### ACTIONS

1. **Ban Neo Nics in pet flea treatments – promote a campaign – PRIORITY ACTION**
2. Educate farmers in alternatives – farmers groups – Whole Health Agriculture
3. Creating ecologically beneficial food growing spaces
4. Convincing others of the benefits of eco-friendly practices (bribe with honey if necessary!)
5. Talk with farmers from an informed position.
6. Political change through events with speakers – e.g Guy Singh-Watson

7. Influence policy to create warnings on food packaging and garden chemicals
8. Buy local organic pesticide-free food when possible.
9. Create a network so that people know where to buy it.
10. Bringing ecological awareness into schools and education.

## Red Group

Go to PAN UK for education and campaign materials  
Share your knowledge  
Joined up Communication Plan  
Rewarding local food producers who farm responsibly  
Petitions  
Changing labels in supermarkets  
Tackling garden centres

**Change what you buy – PRIORITY ACTION**

## Conclusions

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This was a very positive day with a huge amount of different input from our key speakers, workshop facilitators, volunteers, technicians and of course all of our Conference delegates.

### Outcomes of the Day

There were many different outcomes on the day which I will attempt to summarise below.

1. 110 people from across Devon gathered to focus on reducing pesticide use and finding ways to collaborate.
2. The Pesticide-Free Devon Network was established and now has a website and a mailing list of over 160 people.
3. Many practical suggestions for reducing pesticide use in gardens, on farms, in parks and on our streets were shared.
4. We had a phenomenal pesticide-free lunch sourced from local Devon producers, showing that pesticide-free is tasty, healthy and LOCAL!
5. There was a huge amount of networking happening, but also just people getting to know each other more – which is so important for our growing community of Pesticide-Free Pioneers.

### Key Priorities for Action from the Plenary Session + Delegate Feedback

1. Staying in touch with each other – networking / connections (Green Group)
2. Learn to communicate with other communities with opposing views – Enthusiasm – telling a story of success. (Orange Group)
3. Have a flagship species as a hook to get people's focus on reducing pesticide use. (Blue Group)

4. Ban neonicotinoids in pet flea treatments – promote a campaign. (Yellow Group)
5. Change what you buy – choose pesticide-free products. (Red Group)
6. Work with farmers to show them that they can reduce the use of pesticides and other chemicals without reducing profitability and improve their links with local communities. (Individual feedback)
7. Promote “Council success stories” to influence and encourage other Councils across Devon. (Individual feedback)
8. Compile a list of achievable individual actions that people can take immediately e.g. Buy more local organic produce. (Individual feedback)

**Thank you again to everyone who helped make this Conference and Gathering to happen and for helping to produce this Conference Report. For more information please go to :**

**<https://www.pesticidefreedevon.co.uk/pesticide-free-devon-conference-2025>**

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