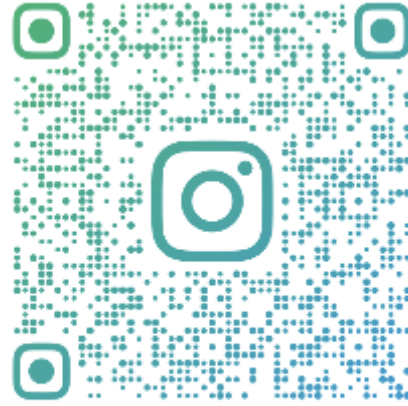
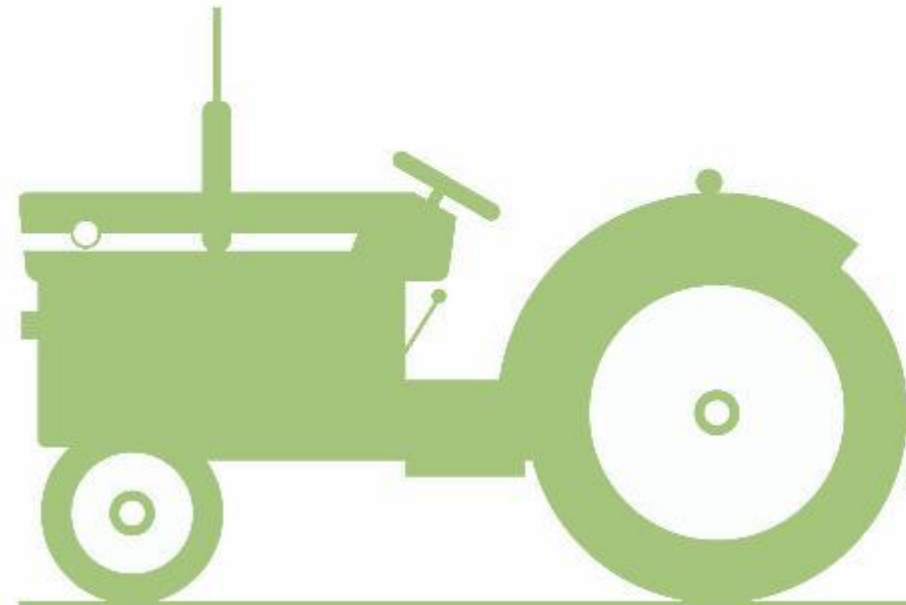


Hartsgrove Farm

Farming with nature



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e*SCAPE rural

Presentation Structure:

- Introductions
- State of the landholding in 2014
- The landholding today
- Pre BNG habitats & wildlife
- Why offsite Biodiversity Net Gain?
- BNG Uncertainties
- Developing our plans & managing habitats
- Community involvement



Introductions

- Roger Lomas
- Came from a farming family
- Father died just before I was born so farm was passed to his brother
- I'm a Landscape Architect & Urban Designer
- Always worked closely with ecologists
- Brought by wife's grandparents farmland back in 2014 after a 43 year gap
- Like her grandad I have two jobs as the farm is more of a smallholding at just 20 acres



State of the landholding in 2014

- The original field pattern had been mainly removed by the previous farmer
- Split into two compartments:
 - i. Silage meadow (5 acres/2 hectares) – sprayed, ploughed & seeded with Rye grass
 - ii. Permanent pasture (15 acres/6.25 hectares) – dry cows & sheep grazing
- Wet woodland (0.6 acres/0.24 hectares) – Alder/Oak woodland
- Boundary hedgerows flailed each winter



The landholding today

- Initially from 2014 we began recreating the original field boundaries whilst renting the land to an adjoining farmer
- In 2020 we took on management of the land
- Created e*SCAPE Rural as our agricultural business arm
- Coming from a farming background we wanted to ensure the land was productive, hence our strapline; 'Farming with nature'
- Began cropping the fields for hay without adding fertilisers, thus reducing the fertility in preparation for creating wildflower meadows



The landholding today

- From 2020 started looking for grant funding to implement the habitats we wanted to create:
 - i. Farm pond grants (Cheshire Wildlife Trust)
 - ii. More Woods (Woodland Trust)
 - iii. More Hedges (Woodland Trust)
- Incremental implementation:
 - i. Constructed fences along historical field boundaries
 - ii. Hired in excavator & dumper to recreate lost ponds
 - iii. Planted woodlands & hedgerows with assistance from local Cubs & Scouts
 - iv. Began to lay existing hedgerows
- Implementation was piecemeal as funds allowed



The landholding today



Our habitats & wildlife



Our habitats & wildlife – life in the barn



28.19 inHg ↑ 35°F 01/03/2020 05:54PM CAMERA1



28.28 inHg ↓ 46°F 01/01/2020 10:28AM CAMERA1

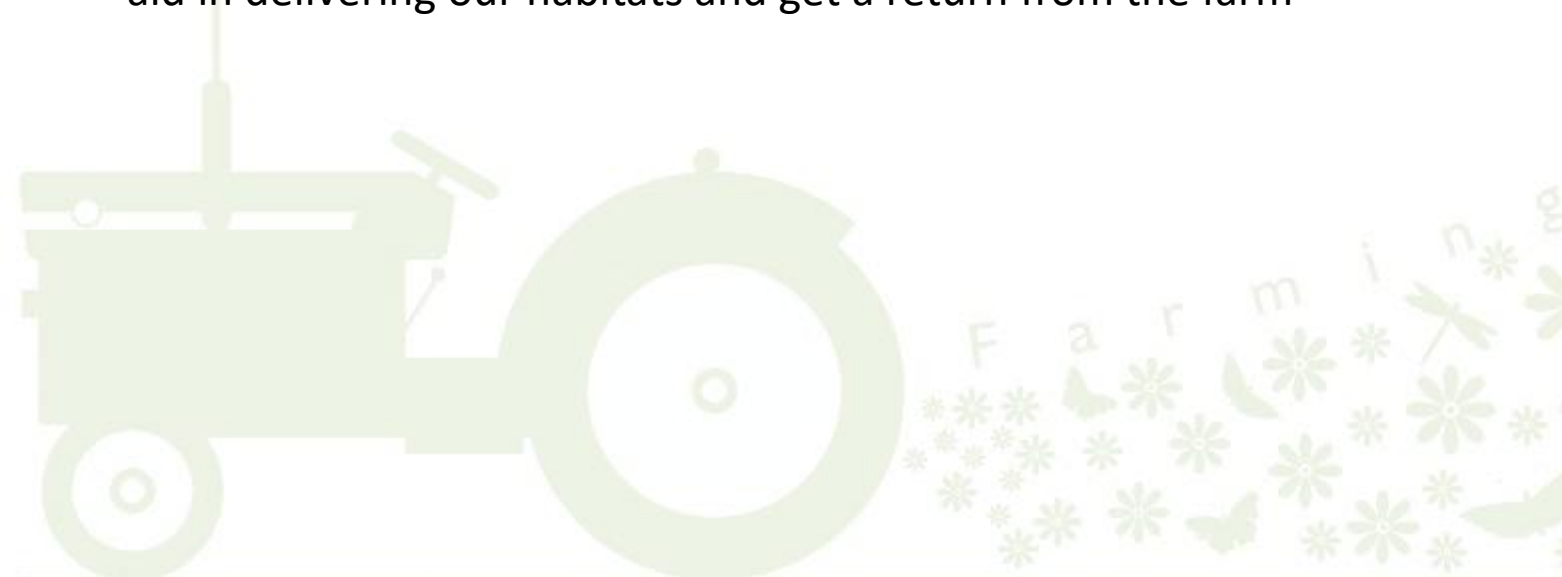


Our habitats & wildlife



Why offsite Biodiversity Net Gain?

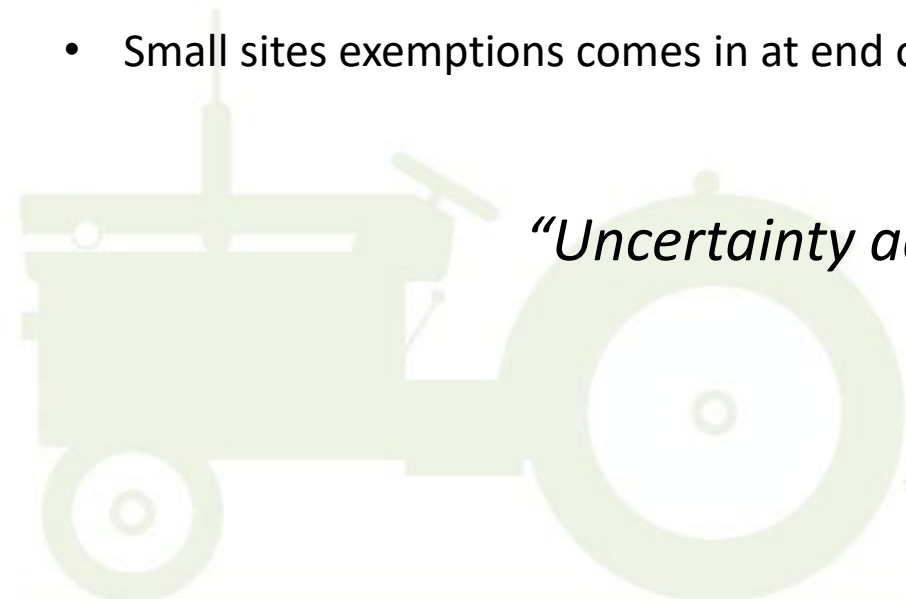
- Joe Dance at Tyler Grange contacted us initially to ask if we'd consider using e*SCAPE Rural to manage offsite BNG land on behalf of other landowners
- Kept encountering BNG on various projects e*SCAPE Urbanists were involved in but we'd not realised that we could utilise offsite BNG at Hartsgrove
- In discussion with Joe we realised it was something we could look at to aid in delivering our habitats and get a return from the farm



BNG Uncertainties

- Delays in implementation of the national policy – however, luckily Cheshire East Council had local policies in place
- Will BNG be upheld with changing Governments?
- Planning upheaval as new policies are implemented
- New government with pro-development/anti nature agenda may open floodgates for demand but adds uncertainty to the market
- The Planning & Infrastructure Bill
- Small sites exemptions comes in at end of this year

“Uncertainty adds risk and creates a volatile market”



Developing our plans & managing habitats

- Joe Dance visited Hartsgrove for the first time in January 2023
- He undertook an initial assessment of the land & then followed up with a second assessment over the summer of 2023
- We had Soil Tests completed for each field
- The primary habitat we aim to create is Lowland Meadow & Neutral Grassland
- The Cheshire East ecology officer visited the farm & followed up with a confirmation that he was happy to use ourselves for offsite BNG



Developing our plans & managing habitats



Soil Test Results

Developing our plans & managing habitats

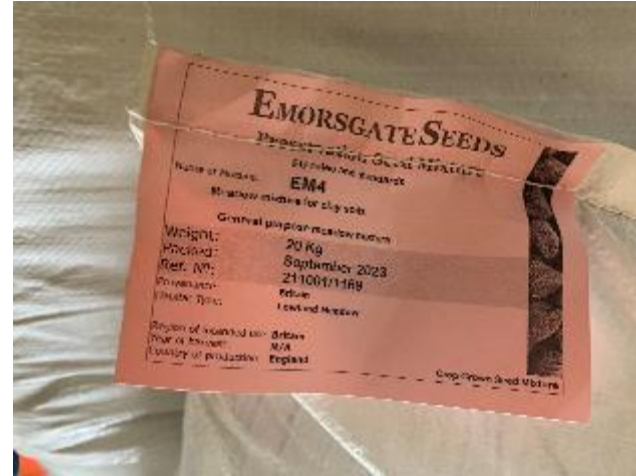
- Issued a prospectus to developers
- Received a lot of initial interest & enquiries
- The key is to be flexible in what habitats can be created:
 - i. Lowland Meadow/Neutral grassland
 - ii. Mixed scrub
 - iii. Mixed native hedgerow & trees
 - iv. Watercourses – stream & ditch
 - v. Traditional orchards
- These habitats will create 55 BNG units
- Value of circa £1,480,150.00



Developing our plans & managing habitats

Lowland Meadow Creation

- Cropped hay in late Summer
- Spot treat ruderal weeds (docks)
- Harrow
- Harrow again
- Roll to create firm seed bed
- Sow seed (Emorsgate EM4 General Purpose Meadow Mixture/EM8 Damp Meadow Mixture) at 40kg/ha
- Roll to firm in the seed
- Cut grass monthly for first year or graze cattle
- In second year cut hay in late July/August once seed has set



Developing our plans & managing habitats

Lowland Meadow Management

Traditional Hay Making:

1. Cut grass once seed has set (August/September)
2. Turn hay 3 to 4 times over 2 to 3 days
3. Bale & store
4. Introduce grazing cattle October to March
5. Sell hay to local farmers, Alpaca/Llama owners & equestrians over winter which pays for the management of the grasslands



Developing our plans & managing habitats

Lowland Meadow Management

Conservation/Extensive Grazing:

1. Rotate in combination with hay making
2. Use native cattle breed (Highlands)
3. Low stocking rates (1 Cow/5 Acres)
4. Grazing cattle October to March
5. Light spring & summer grazing
6. Rest areas to allow plants to flower & seed – different areas at different times encourages different plant groupings to establish
7. Creates variable sward height
8. Creates bare poached earth allowing seed germination
9. Cattle are better on wet meadows than other grazers



Developing our plans & managing habitats



Developing our plans & managing habitats

Scrub planting:

- Agreed species mix with CEC ecologist
- Agreed planting plan
- Sourced stock from Thorpe Trees in York
- Programmed planting for February
- Arranged planting session with Cubs & Scouts
- Trees 'T-notch' planted
- Protected with guards & canes
- After initial 5 years rotationally coppice 20% of planting every year

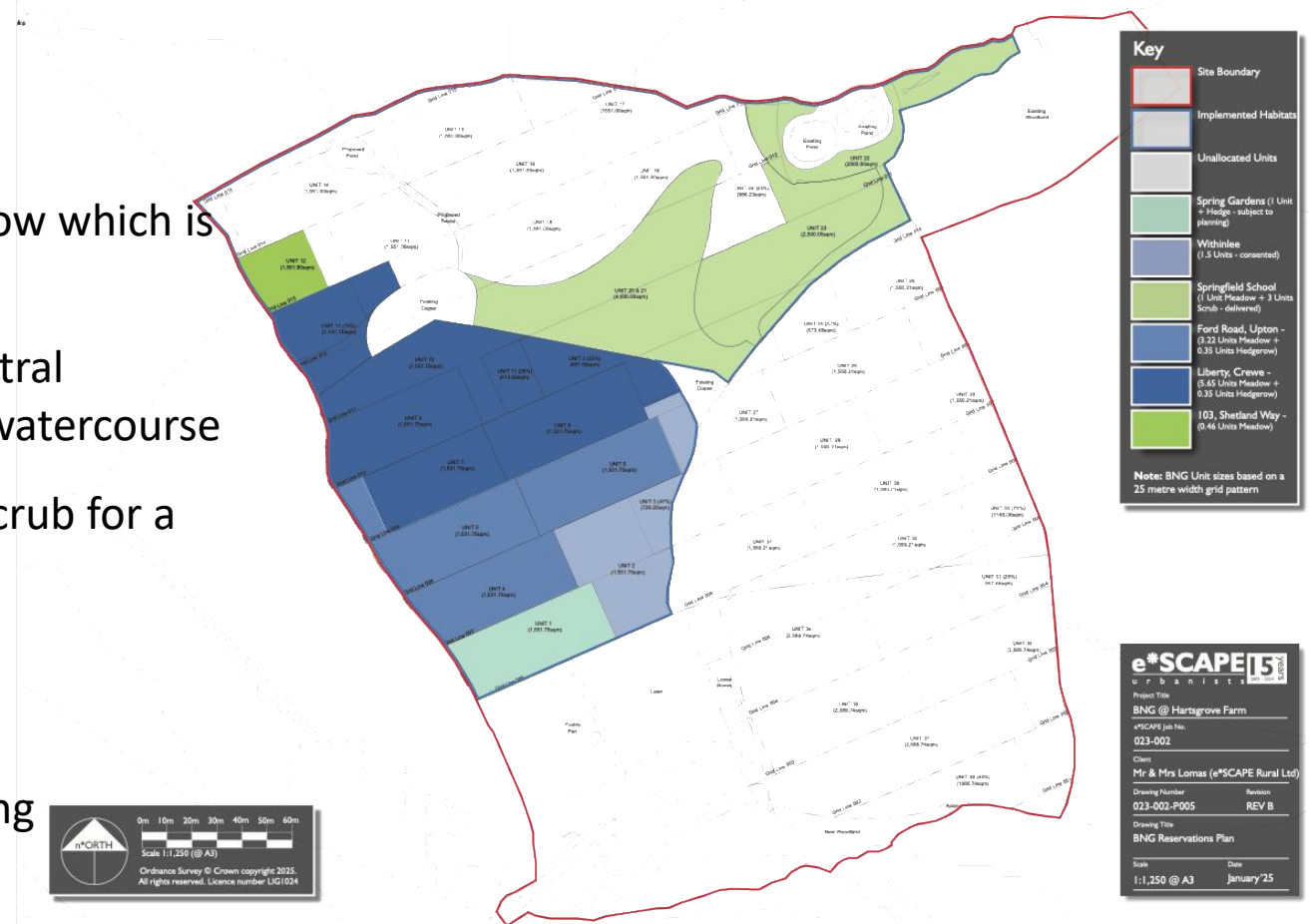


Developing our plans & managing habitats



Developing our plans & managing habitats

- So far:
 - i. Creating a 33.88 unit habitat bank of Lowland Meadow which is now registered on the National Register
 - ii. Agreeing a 2nd habitat bank of circa 8.79 units of neutral grassland, 10.6 units of hedgerow and 1.63 units of watercourse
 - iii. Sold 1 unit of Lowland Meadow & 3 units of mixed scrub for a school in Crewe
 - iv. Sold 1.5 units of Lowland Meadow to a single house development in Prestbury
 - v. Sold 0.46 units of Lowland Meadow to a small housing development in Davyhulme
 - vi. Sold 1.85 units of Lowland Meadow to a single house development in Knutsford
 - vii. We have reserved an additional 15.33 units of Lowland Meadow, circa 1 unit of hedgerow and circa 0.50 units of watercourse



Community involvement

Woodland planting March'22



Scrubland planting March'24



Community involvement

Wildflower plug planting & pond dipping May'25



Community involvement



Nature Trail Leaflet

Conclusions for us...

- BNG has enabled us to create a semi-natural environment we could only dream of a few years ago!
- The land can still be productive, & for us that includes:
 - i. Hay
 - ii. Wood (fuel)
 - iii. Eggs
 - iv. Rare Breeds – Chickens, Geese & Highland Cattle
 - v. Honey
 - vi. Foraging – Orchard Fruits, Sloes, Blackberries, Crab Apples & Fungi
 - vii. Orchard Fruits – Apples, Pears, Cherries & Plums











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