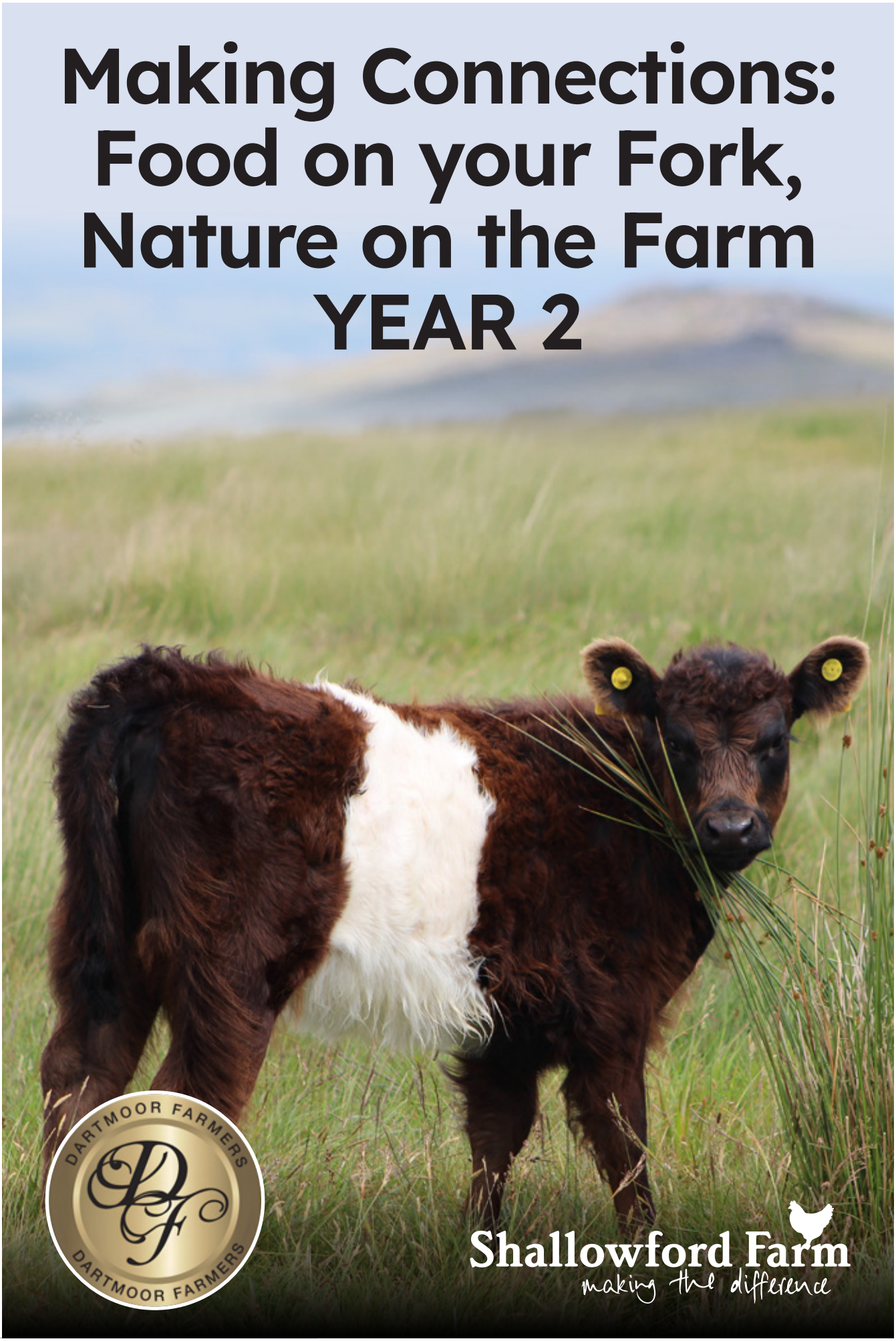
Making Connections: Food on your Fork, Nature on the Farm YEAR 2



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Foreword by Mat Cole, Dartmoor Farmers Director and Steering Group Chair

Dartmoor Farmers has always championed sustainable, resilient, nature friendly farming as one of its core principles. Our partnership with Educatering and the knowledge that school children across the south west enjoy Dartmoor produce every day was the inspiration for this project. We shared a vison with our partners at Shallowford and Educatering that we wanted to complete the circle and educate our young community about Farming on Dartmoor, the food they eat and the nature and landscape they enjoy.

This project has now finished its second year and has once again built on the foundations set down in last years project. We have learnt a lot after our second year and are now looking to grow the opportunity for our community of young people who will hopefully build lasting connections with the Dartmoor landscape, nature and its Farmers.

As Chair of the steering group of Making connection I would like to thank:

Our facilitator Jaime whose enthusiasm and commitment for the project has allowed it to flourish and grow, supported by the team at Shallowford, Will and Fiona, who have supported the project and helped with technical support and guidance.

The participating farmers who have embraced the project and deliver amazing events across Dartmoor's rugged landscape and varied seasons. This project is driven by you and your ability to lean on the gate and tell our story.

The visiting Schools and the hundreds of children, teachers and support staff. It is fantastic to get repeat visits and experience your enthusiasm for Dartmoor farming and the lasting connections we are making.

Finally, I would like to thank the Team at Farming in Protected Landscapes who have encouraged this project to grow and thrive. FiPL have secured DEFRA funding for another three years and we will be working hard to pursue the opportunity to fund this project into the future.

Foreword by Fiona Lambeck, Trust Manager, The Shallowford Trust

The Shallowford Trust have been thrilled with the opportunity to again work with Dartmoor Farmers Association to deliver this Farming in Protected Landscapes Funded Project for its second year. This year we have been very conscious of the increased enthusiasm and confidence for the project amongst farmers and schools. The project is groundbreaking in enabling schools to access a wide variety of farms across Dartmoor and to share constantly increasing knowledge of providing high quality farm visits.

We have very much enjoyed the collaborative work with Dartmoor Farmers, hosting the Engagement Officer and providing a meeting place for the network. We would particularly like to thank Mat Cole from the DFA for his endless enthusiasm and commitment to the project.

We are looking forward to ongoing collaboration with Dartmoor Farmers as the project continues to grow, and provide increased opportunities for young people to spend a day on a Dartmoor Farm, and opening doors into young people understanding the importance of asking questions about the food they are eating and who has produced it and how it has been grown.

Without funding from DEFRA, Farming in Protected Landscapes and the commitment of all involved , this project would not have been possible. We very much hope that this project will be able to continue to grow and that more and more young people in Devon will be able to benefit from time spent on Dartmoor Farms and increase opportunities for farmers and young people to work and learn together.

Making Connections: Food on your Fork, Nature on the Farm YEAR 2

Background and Project Summary

Our second year of *Making Connections: Food on your Fork, Nature on the Farm, Farm to Fork* project. The project is a collaboration between Dartmoor Farmers Association and Shallowford Farm.

Funding for our project was provided by Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) awarded by DEFRA through the Dartmoor National Park Authority.

In its second year the project has built great momentum after a very well received first Year. In Year 1 we hosted 35 visits on Dartmoor farms with over 1000 young people taking part.

Our first pilot year we were trying new ideas and how they would work with schools visiting working Dartmoor farms. The participating farmers have really embraced the project, making the visits their own and making strong connections with schools and developing new ideas for continuing the project. Some farmers have built lasting connections with the visiting schools, giving updates about what is happening on the farm throughout the year. Confidence from schools to bring the young people to a farm visit is key to the collaboration and building lasting connections.

By building relationships with our local community and local schools we are teaching the next generation about farming with nature to produce a thriving national park which delivers nature, landscape, food and sustainable farming businesses into the future.

The Team

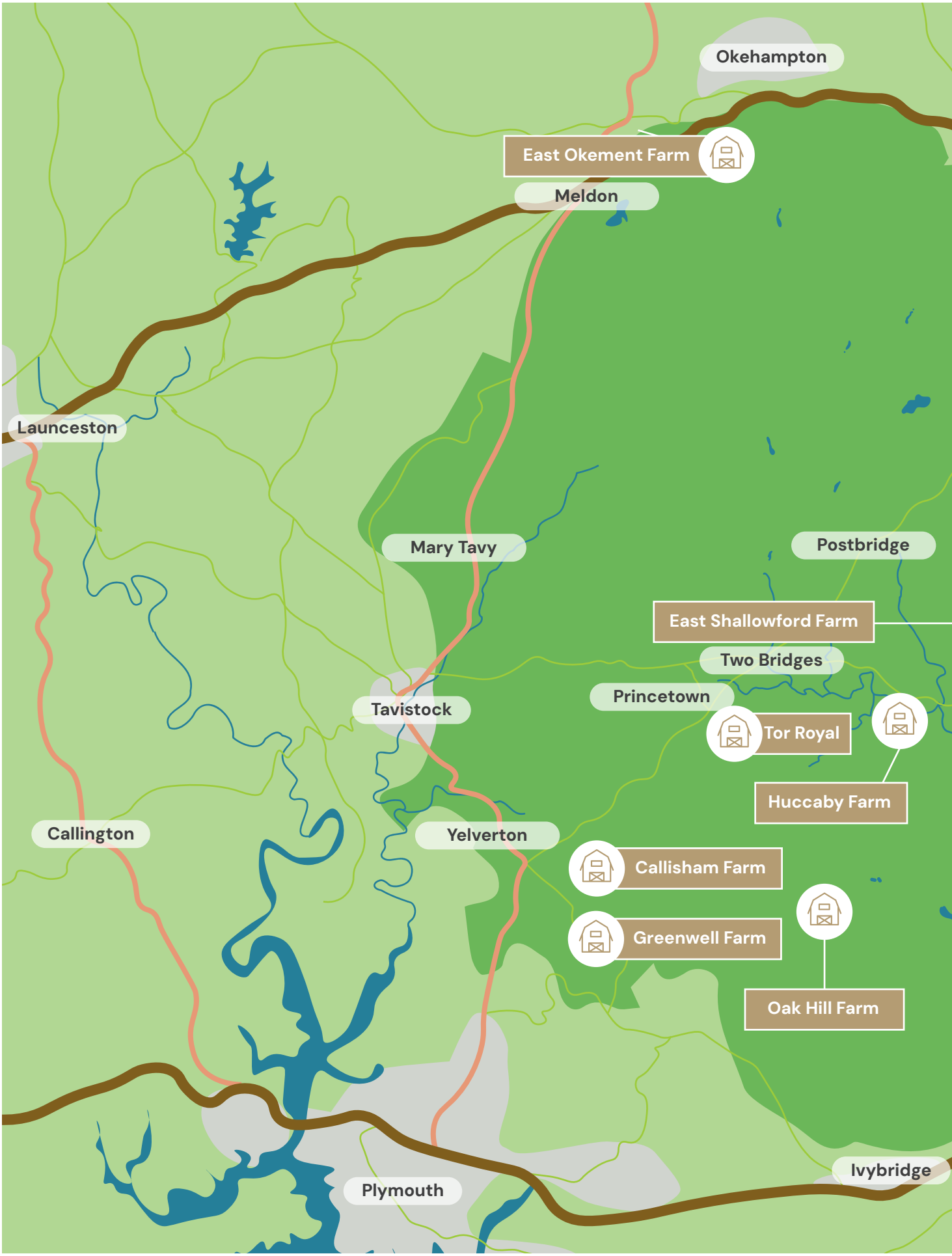
We now have an established farm to fork engagement officer who runs the project along with a steering group made up of Dartmoor farmers. Jaime has been with Shallowford now from the early days of the project where she started carrying out the risk assessments on the Dartmoor farms and gradually took over more of the engagement officer role. Jaime now runs the project with support from the team at Shallowford Farm and Dartmoor Farmers Association.

Jaime has grown into the role of engagement officer and has facilitated the connections between the farmers and the schools. This has allowed the schools and the farmers to engage with visits with confidence knowing that the ground work has been done to allow connections to be made.

Core Farms and Farmers

We now have a group of 11 core farms who deliver visits throughout the year. Two of the farms have stepped away due to other commitments but we have had two new farms join this year who have delivered excellent visits for schools. Encouraged by our collaborative knowledge share days which allowed new farmers the opportunity to go on a visit to engage with the project.

See location of core farms on map overleaf.


Okehampton
East Okement Farm
Meldon
Launceston
Mary Tavy
Postbridge
East Shallowford Farm
Two Bridges
Princetown
Tavistock
Tor Royal
Huccaby Farm
Callington
Yelverton
Callisham Farm
Greenwell Farm
Oak Hill Farm
Plymouth
Ivybridge

Whiddon Down
Exeter
Chagford
Moretonhampstead
Bovey Tracey
Hatchwell Farm
Great Dunstone
Ridgey Park Farm
Newton Abbot
Bowden Farm
Buckfastleigh
Torquay
Paignton

Core Farms and Farmers

The farms host visits at times that work for them and their farms. Most farmers prefer Spring visits as there is so much going on at the farm but others are happy to host visits in the autumn when it is a little quieter. Everyone has times in the year when hosting visits works better for them and this has worked well over the past two years with visits spread across the Calander and there always seems to be a rush at the end to get the last visits done by the funding deadline. We try and avoid visits in the depths of winter as getting schools onto Dartmoor farms at this time of year can be challenging with our very wet climate. Visits ran successfully from September to early December and for the whole of March until the funding ended.

Our core farms are now growing in confidence when hosting visits on their farms, the project has gone from strength to strength with lots learnt about what works and what doesn't. The farmers are trying new ideas for activities on the farm which tie into the national curriculum and how to engage young people in learning how nature friendly farming is supporting food production.

During the winter months we see a potential opportunity going forward into year 3 and get our farmers to visit the class room to further take the farm to schools in a small way. Allowing us to nurture relationships with our wider community and the next generation out of season through the winter months when the children are unable to get out onto the farms.

By opening the gates and welcoming young people onto the farm everyone has learnt so much and it has brought a new dimension to life on the farm. It has showcased how farming with nature can produce amazing food alongside a thriving natural environment.

Being a farmer can be quite isolating with long hours spent working by yourself, but having visitors to the farm and shining a light onto what farmers do on a daily basis and where their food comes from has been a very positive experience for all the farmers involved in the project.

The farmers are growing in confidence, exploring different activity ideas for their visits. The Collaborative Knowledge Share days (CKSDs) have been a great learning opportunity for the farmers to go along and help out on another farms visit and encourage new farmers to get involved. They have also been great for younger farmers and helpers. Getting involved and helping their personal development and confidence and illustrating how farm visits can help a small business grow opportunity.

While all of the visits take on a similar theme the visits are all unique and this is what makes the project so interesting. Bringing all the farmers knowledge and experience together to shine a light on Dartmoor farms. The farmers have felt part of something very powerful when contributing to this project and with many of the farmers suppling produce to Goosemoor and Educatering (school meals) it has helped complete a circle in our local community.

What has been happening during a visit?

There has been so much happening during the visits to the farm;
Nature based walk around the farm where the young people have space, immersing themselves in the landscape and experiencing nature on the farm.

Scavenger hunts, mindfulness activities, looking at different grasses, digging for worms, hedge hunts and plant identification which has been a great way to highlight the small things that you don't always notice. This has been a really good way to teach them about nature on the farm and the ways in which the farmer is helping nature and working with it.

Farm tour in the trailer pulled by the tractor or quad bike to get close to the dairy cows, the cows and calves the sheep flock. Enabling the visitors to be amongst the animals but safe in the trailer whilst watching the animals in their environment.

Getting up close to the animals is a big highlight, the young people particularly enjoy, whether that is feeding the cows silage through the barrier in the shed, lamb and goat petting, cuddling the puppies, handling baby chicks, collecting eggs, weighing lambs or just being involved in a few chores around the animals.

Common walks exploring moorlands, peat bogs, the history which layers and defines our Dartmoor landscape and has shaped it.

What we have learnt?

The project has highlighted that young people have lost connection with nature, landscape and food production. In busy lives a ritual like sitting down to a home cooked meal to re connect with the family and share what has happened that day has become a thing of the past. Busy lives, after school clubs, computers, gaming, phones and financial constraints have all contributed to us spending less time together as a family.

Young people once given the opportunity love being outside surrounded by nature. The project has been fundamental in giving young people from local and inner-city areas the chance to visit our farms. The fully funded trips have really benefited schools but the funding for the transport has unlocked the barrier to most schools with budgets being so tight.

The schools once engaged have embraced the opportunity to get young people onto Dartmoor farms and working with Jaime to ensure they have the best day. Teachers have the opportunity to pre visit the farms, meet the farmers and discuss logistics for the day. The pre visits give the teachers confidence and a feel for what is to come and has been essential in making the visits run more smoothly.
Some schools have taken the opportunity to re visiting farms they visited last year and we have also had a good number of new schools take part. By visiting a farm again, the teachers are getting to know their farmers, they know what to expect which really helps build confidence and longer partnership working.
Through the project we have been able to purchase a supply of waterproofs and wellies for the visitors to borrow for the day. Often young people don't have their own and these have been vital in making the visits more accessible for all.

The project has also funded the building of a handwash station in the form of a trailer which can be moved around from farm to farm. This has been absolutely essential to the farms who do not have these facilities along with the funding of porta loo hire. All helping to facilitate functional practical visits.

We have worked with (PCiP) Promoting children in Plymouth again this year who have helped identify new schools where children would benefit greatly from getting out of the city and into the countryside. Our partnership with PCiP has been amazing and the work they do benefits so many children from Plymouth.

School	Date	Farm	Number of Children	New or Re-visiting School
St Mary's Primary	22/09/25	Bowden Farm	31	Re-visiting
St Mary's Primary	23/09/25	Bowden Farm	33	Re-visiting
Chudleigh Knighton Primary	10/10/25	Hatchwell farm	21	Re-visiting
Chudleigh Primary	13/10/25	Great Dunstone Farm	32	New
Chudleigh Primary	14/10/25	Great Dunstone Farm	33	New
Barley Lane School	16/10/25	East Okement Farm	7 + 4 adults	Re-visiting
Meavy Primary	16/10/25	Oak Hill Farm	27	Re-visiting
Okehampton Primary	5/11/25	East Okement Farm	30	Re-visiting
Okehampton Primary	6/11/25	East Okement Farm	31	Re-visiting
Princetown Primary	10/11/25	Huccaby Farm	21	Re-visiting
Buckfastleigh Primary	21/11/25	Ridgey Park Farm	30	New
Buckfastleigh Primary	5/12/25	Ridgey Park Farm	23	New
Whitchurch Primary	3/3/25	Callisham Farm	30	New
St Peter's Primary	10/3/26	Callisham Farm	20	New
Ford and Mayflower Primary	11/3/26	Callisham Farm	20	New
Furzeham primary	13/3/26	Ridgey Park Farm	20	New
Meavy Primary	16/3/26	Greenwell Farm	23	Re-visiting
Blackpool Primary	18/3/26	Hatchwell Farm	30	New
Blackpool Primary	19/3/26	Hatchwell Farm	30	New
Blackpool Primary	20/3/26	Hatchwell Farm	30	New
Furzeham Primary	20/3/26	Ridgey Park Farm	20	New
Old Priory Primary	23/3/26	Greenwell Farm	30	New
Chaddlewood Primary	24/3/26	Greenwell Farm	30	Re-visiting
Chaddlewood Primary	25/3/26	Greenwell farm	30	Re-visiting
Old Priory Primary	26/3/26	Greenwell Farm	30	New
High Street Primary	26/3/26	Callisham Farm	30	Re-visiting
Shakespeare Primary	27/3/26	Oak Hill Farm	30	Re-visiting
Old Priory Primary	27/3/26	Greenwell Farm	30	New

Summary of the year's statistics: year 2

The schools visiting for the second time were really easy to engage, the connection has helped get visits booked and have run smoothly. The teachers are building good connections with the farmers and confidence is growing.

New schools are engaging as the school's community are hearing about the quality of our visits and the support we offer.

It has been an amazing opportunity for so many children who without the funding from FIPL wouldn't get to take part in such an amazing experience.

Future of the Project

We are very excited to hear that the FIPL funding is being extended for another three years which enables Dartmoor Farmers to put in another bid for the coming year. The project has built momentum and we want it to continue to grow. Offering more visits, empowering more farms and reaching out to our wider community of young people. Creating a small diversification opportunity on farm and using the opportunity not just to educate the next generation about nature friendly farming on Dartmoor but attracting new entrants to our diverse industry with so many opportunities based around countryside, nature and food

The meet the farmer interviews on the Dartmoor farmers website are an excellent resource and can be sent out to schools ahead of visits. It gives them an insight into our farming lives and who we are and as the project evolves, we would like to encourage more of our farmers to get involved and showcase on the website. It has been a really personal addition to the website for www.dartmoorfarmers.co.uk as it showcases our farmers and how we work with nature to produce the very best local produce.

What the children said about their visits

We learned how everything depends on everything else

It was the best trip we've been on

I learnt about it in school but nice to see a farm in real life

It was fantastic, thank you for the visit!

This was a super experience and for the children to see a lamb being born was amazing

Feeding the calves was the best

It felt like freedom

I got to see my first lamb being born

Memorable moments

One of the children with severe trauma became fully engaged, calmly feeding the cattle

Children who had never been on the moor were absolutely engaged, lovely to see

Seeing lots of smiling faces. One child said it was the best school trip they had ever been on

How engaged some of our challenging children were – a real success

Partners

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

Dartmoor National Park

Dartmoor Farmers

Shallowford Farm
making the difference

Duchy of Cornwall

Dartmoor Hill Farm Project

pcip

Goosemoor Foodservice

Educatering
The School Food Revolution

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