

North Mentor Team Profiles 2025/2026

Paul Renison, Cannerheugh, Renwick, Near Penrith

Paul farms with his wife Nic. Bitten by the grazing bug about eight years ago, they currently have 80 Aberdeen Angus Sucklers, stores are sold at 18 months with pastured egg laying hens following the herd in an egg mobile. Getting to grips with moving cattle daily, planning ahead and getting infrastructure sorted has been a huge learning curve, but he believes that economically and environmentally this is a no brainer.



Emily Grant, Perthshire

Emily started her farming career with a handful of ewes on an annually rented field. Initially the business focused on producing prime lambs from pasture, but with a strong interest in genetics and performance recording, the opportunity arose to partner with Innovis producing Abertex and Abermax rams. Still working with Innovis, the farm is now a dedicated ram growing unit. Although not registered organic, the farm aligns with organic principles minimising the use of external inputs, looking after soils and making strategic use of anthelmintics.



Stuart Mitchell, Whitriggs, Hawick

Stuart took over running the family farm in the Scottish Borders back in 2018 and farms alongside his wife and parents. Previously run as a conventional mixed cattle, sheep and arable farm there has been big changes since 2018 with the change from sheep to red deer and conversion of the whole farm to organic status. Without sheep the grazing management has been adapted and allows for the cattle to be outwintered with deferred grass and bale grazing. Mob grazing with daily moves over the summer allows for a stock pile of grass and cattle are no longer fed any grain. This has been a big learning experience and he's loving the direction the farm is going in.



Alex Main, Bewcastle, Cumbria

Alex, originally from Lanarkshire, moved to a 150 acre farm in Bewcastle in 2009 with his parents. Originally enjoying showing fat lambs with success at the likes of Borderway Agri Expo and Livescot until 2019 when the grazing bug took over in lockdown, and his partner Victoria moved in. Now they run a closed flock of 300 ewes and 100 followers mainly North Country Hill Cheviots and Cheviot Mules. The last few years they have been trying to reduce inputs and have been getting further each year with winter rotations. Initially starting rotational grazing for the extra grass, they have changed to more soil and biodiversity focused with a leader follower approach of sheep and then cattle.





Andrew & Sally Hattan, North Yorkshire

The Hattans are first generation farmers on an isolated hill farm in the Yorkshire Dales. For the first 5 years of their tenancy, they renovated the farm and produced sheep and beef conventionally. 10 years ago, they decided they needed to change in order to be sustainable and invested in a vision for the future.

They established a herd of rare breed, native Northern Dairy Shorthorns and developed the infrastructure, knowledge and skills to make an unpasteurised dales-type cheese consistent with the heritage of the farm. They make cheese seasonally when the cows are out in the grass and have invested in restoring

hay meadows and pastureland. They sell Stonebeck cheese locally and nationally through specialist cheesemongers. <https://www.stonebeckcheese.co.uk/>

They can share direct and indirect experiences which include: managing change, diversification & added value, setting up a new food business, funding applications, farm consultancy, tenancy applications and cash flow.



Bill Grayson, Milnthorpe, Cumbria

Bill and his wife Cath farm about 650 ha of different semi-natural habitats, which include unimproved rough grazing (mostly on limestone) meadow, heath, salt marsh, fen, reed bed, wood pasture and scrub, all of them located within the area adjoining Morecambe Bay. Bill & Cath are known as the Morecambe Bay Conservation Grazing Company.

Their system, which has been continuously evolving over the last 30 years, is a rather unconventional one, in that it consists of a suite of separately

leased land parcels, none of which amounts to a viable farm unit in their own right. However, in combination, they provide a basis for a successful Organic- and Pasture for Life-certified livestock operation, based on Red Poll cattle and Easycare sheep.

Jim Beary, Penrith, Cumbria

Jim currently farms 465 hectares at Gaythorne Hall Farm, comprising 364 ha of mixed quality pasture and 101ha of commercial forestry and traditional woodland. Originally home to 900 Swaledale ewes producing mule gimmer lambs and a 50-head suckler herd of British Blue cross Limousin cows, Jim has radically changed the system to make the business financially viable. Two years on and the farm now runs a flock of 600 Aberfield, Easy Care and Cheviot ewes, alongside 400 hogs, and a suckler herd of 50 native Hereford and Angus cows which are outwintered all year round on a rotational grazing system.

Jim also finishes 150 Aberdeen Angus store cattle supplying Lake District Farmers, which also run as part of a mob grazing system on herbal leys over the summer. Additionally, a small flock of laying hens in a mobile poultry unit follows both the cattle and sheep in a grazing rotation to improve soil fertility, with eggs sold to a local farm shop and services at Tebay.



Jenny & Mark Lee, Torpenhow, Wigton

Jenny and Mark Lee farm 350 acres in north Cumbria. Park House is a dairy farm, milking 110 crossbred cows, on a spring block calving grazing system. They have diversified by producing cheese and gelato, with a milk vending machine and other products made from milk and whey. They have experience in building a brand and selling pasture fed products direct to shops, wholesalers and consumers.



Their grazing platform has changed over the last 4 years to incorporate over 100 acres of wooded pasture and the cows are grazed 11 months of the year. They have partnered with RAISE and the Apricot centre to deliver training and provide regenerative farming education. Park House is a Beacon Farm for the Sustainable Food Trust and a Pioneer Farm for First Milk.

Angus Nelless, Morpeth, Northumberland

Angus farms in a family partnership located in mid Northumberland. The cattle and sheep are Pasture for Life and Organic certified. The main farming activities are an enclosed, performance recorded, sheep flock comprising 2000 Lleyn ewes with an additional 600 ewe lambs and 260 Aberdeen Angus based suckler cows with progeny finished on farm or sold as stores.

The family also have a small free range turkey unit finishing 1500 birds for Christmas. The enterprises are managed across 860 hectares of good to marginal land in the Coquet Valley, Mid Northumberland with approximately half owned and half rented on 3 FBT's.



Alan Cowan, Stamfordham, Northumberland

Alan farms with his wife Esther near Newcastle, on a grass farm with suckler cattle and sheep. After reading about New Zealand based systems, they started rotational grazing in 2006 and at the same time started to winter cows outside on kale. 2012 was the year they started grass wintering of breeding ewes which has resulted in many benefits. These include improved grass growth in spring, subsequently reducing costs with the increased grass covers now enabling outdoor lambing, ensuring very little supplementary feed

needs to be used. Having established a long term, flexible system that works, Alan reassures farmers he talks to that investment in fencing and water infrastructure without doubt provides the biggest payback.





Mark Palmer, North Yorkshire

With over 40 years of experience of farming and growing, with the last 25 mainly in the organic sector. Mark has managed a large estate farm, with 1000 ewe flock, grown packed and processed vegetables for supermarkets and spent 7 years as an organic inspector covering businesses from field to fork, across the UK and Europe.

Since 2022, he has run his own business, Systems4food Ltd, providing advisory work to farms helping them become more resilient, including

sustainability assessments for Soil Association Exchange, and regional advice for Pfl. Interest areas include getting the best from grassland, herbal leys, rotational grazing and building farm resilience. In his spare time, he helps out his partner on her family's organic dairy and cereal farm, in the North York Moors.



Kate Roberts, Cumbria

Kate began as a teacher, became interested in diet and nutrition for the neurological health of her students, and because of that, retrained in soil health. She ran a smallholding (flowers and goats!) where she trialled techniques that connected plants, microbes, animals and terrain. Kate now has a range of workshops around the subject of building active, living soil, in particular:

- Using specific plant groups to boost soil life, which then boosts provision back to plants.
- Microbial groups to suit the stage the soil is at, how to grow them and application methods,
- Specific workshops also show ways to measure the health of soils and plants, including how to use a microscope so that farmers can assess their own soil.

See more at: <https://www.livingsoillab.co.uk/>. Her workshops are held at Crosby Ravensworth, Cumbria. The morning session of 'Living Soil One' can be held elsewhere.

Simon Hare, Barnard Castle, Co Durham

Simon farms near Barnard Castle in Co. Durham with 400 acres of all grassland. It used to be a conventional dairy farm but he has made the switch to producing organic grass fed beef, wanting to create a simple system that wasn't as reliant on outside purchases and the fluctuating prices (generally going up) that came with it such as all the feed that was bought in for the dairy cows. Without fertiliser Simon tried to grow as much grass as possible and through this is continuing to learn about grazing management to grow lots of grass. Simon also progressed into learning about holistic management. He is currently focusing on improving the genetics of the cattle and the functioning of the land.



David Comforth, Kent

Still a Yorkshire man but farming in Kent, David ceased high input/no profit farming over 25 years ago after stepping off the treadmill of generations of farmers wrecking the soils on his farm. David now uses his beef herd as a tool to rebuild his soil health, which increases forage production and then increases stock numbers whilst also increasing pasture diversity. David achieves this through heavy stock pressure and long rest periods with zero outputs other than electric fencing. David's forage production is now higher than it has ever been and he is keen to help others achieve this without excessive public money.



Neil Heseltine, Hill Top Farm, Malham, Skipton, North Yorkshire

Neil Heseltine, alongside his partner Leigh and daughter Violet, farms at Hill Top Farm in Malham which is a mix of owned and tenanted land 800ft to 1800ft above sea level. The farm's 1200 acres sits on the Mid Craven Fault, creating a 50/50 split between limestone and millstone grit with rush pasture, heather moorland and species-rich hay meadows. Neil's farming system has re-established its relationship with nature and his native breed livestock have been central to this. Fundamentally, his approach is about achieving environmental and financial sustainability whilst achieving a good work/life balance.



Ruth Dalton, Cumbria

Ruth and her husband graze cattle, sheep and goats on 180 acres in the South Lakes, a mixture of owned and conservation-grazed land ranging from limestone to acid grassland, wetlands and wood pasture. Increasing biodiversity whilst running a profitable farm business are their key aims, and they sell both pedigree breeding stock and meat. Over the years they have worked to select animals that suit their outwintered, low-input system and are always chasing the holy grail of the "perfect cow"...

Ruth is passionate about native breeds and their place in profitable farming systems and worked for the Rare Breeds Survival Trust as a Field Officer for 10 years. She is now self-employed as an independent farming adviser, and also enjoys working on a contract basis as a Project Manager with The Farmer Network and as a regional facilitator for Pasture for Life.



Roger & Nat Marsden, Clitheroe

Nat and Roger run a beef and sheep farm over 1000 acres on the edge of the Forest of Bowland. They ran a conventional system until 4 years ago when they started to experiment with rotational grazing, firstly with the cattle.

The farm consists of 50 registered Luing breeding cattle with the progeny being kept for replacements or finished off grass. Some of the fattening cattle are sold directly as boxed beef, and the rest sold to a local abattoir. 20-30 dairy bred beef calves are purchased annually from a local dairy farm which are reared to strong stores before being sold through the local auction mart. The sheep flock mainly consisted of Swaledales on the fell ground and Mules and Texel crosses on the lower ground. More recently Cheviot and Easydam genetics have been introduced. Fat lambs are sold dead weight via a local collection centre to Kepak.



Megan Mulholland, North Yorkshire

Megan Mulholland is a new entrant farmer from South Africa based in North Yorkshire. She fell into agriculture 6 years ago when her employer needed help on the farm as it expanded. She loved getting more involved and was frequently asking her colleagues about the reasoning behind certain agricultural practices that were very different to what she'd grown up witnessing.

In South Africa, Megan worked for a forward-thinking woman who'd studied under Allan Savoury and her tendency to ask questions and understand reasoning rubbed off. These questions, coupled with getting the team to read *Dirt to Soil*, started a shift in systems on the farm.

So far they have cut out feed and fertilizer and reduced the amount of time livestock spend housed over winter. Sheep and 50% of the cattle are now lambed and calved outside and they generally have a happy team that is able to take all their annual leave. The knowledge they've acquired and the changes they've been able to make have totally changed the direction and profitability of the business.



Joe Kidd, Cumbria

Joe Kidd runs a business focusing on utilising pasture and home-grown feed to support a beef and sheep enterprise which changes depending upon wider market conditions. He uses his background gained from farm business consultancy and managing a 3000ac regenerative estate in Scotland to find balance in his operation between nature, profit and enjoyment.

His current farm, Briggles, is increasing room for wildlife whilst actively reducing fertiliser, anthelmintic and chemical use through rotational grazing practices, changing sward varieties and experimental cropping. The business is bolstered by numerous emerging diversifications.



Sam & Claire Beaumont, Cumbria

Claire, Sam, and their two children farm in Partnership with Claire's parents at Gowbarrow Hall Farm near Ullswater. In 2019 they embarked on a joint venture with Wilderculture CIC to radically regenerate the farm, and now manage herds of Beef Shorthorn Cattle, Kune Kune Pigs and Fell Ponies.

They started a Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship scheme in 2023, focussing on Wood Pasture, Species-Rich Grassland and Heather Moorland habitats. The Beef Enterprise is Pasture for Life certified, and they have started Organic Conversion with OF&G. With

the help of volunteers, they are also now growing vegetables and herbs.

They sell all their Beef and Pork direct to customers and have started manufacturing leather products. They are also catering for educational visits and courses hosted on the farm.



Rich Summers

Rich Summers has spent three decades working across the meat world, from farms and abattoirs to specialist butchery and award winning charcuterie. Rich now focuses on helping farmers, small producers and growing food businesses create supply chains that are humane, ecological and commercially robust. His experience covers the whole journey.

He builds practical models that turn regenerative principles into real world results. From whole carcass optimisation, meat costings and cutting strategies to recipe development, food safety, staff training and production unit design, Rich helps producers get more value from every animal while improving welfare and reducing waste.





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