GREENMOUNTAINEER MAGAZINE

Stay connected with the Greenmount Association

The Greenmount Association is delighted to have successfully elected a new committee this year, who are at the forefront of our decision making and eager to bring the Greenmount Association back to life.

I am extremely privileged to be elected as this year's President and hope to continue the strong legacy the Association holds for many, transcending generations of past students. I am thrilled to be part of the newly established 2026 committee, and to be involved in what looks to be a promising year for the Greenmount Association so please look out for posts on our social media page and in the press to keep up to date with all events and news.

The committee consists of a wide range of past students from across the years and from all over the country providing a good representation.

Lisa Burrows, President

Highlights of 2025 were the annual reunions. Thirty Horticulture and Agriculture students from the Class of 1985 visited the college for a look around the facilities. It was great to have past lecturers present to rekindle memories from 40 years ago, with many stories shared.

We were also privileged to host a 60th anniversary for the students from the Class of 1965. This was organised by a small team of students from that year. Twenty-five students braved the elements of Storm Amy and enjoyed a lunch and stories from years gone by.

The Greenmount Association Cup was presented at the Further Education Awards Ceremony. This year the Cup was presented to James Patterson from Ballykelly, a Level 2 Apprenticeship Agriculture, Livestock Production student who excelled in practical skills.

Patrick Fee, PRO, presents the Greenmount Association Cup to Level 2 Apprenticeship student, James Patterson.

Open

Rekindling memories of 40 and 60 years

The Greenmount Association was delighted to host both a 40 year reunion and a 60 year reunion for the classes of 1965 and 1985 during the autumn of 2025. The 40th reunion took place in September, followed by the 60th reunion in October. With name badges providing some useful prompts, there were plenty of smiles and handshakes as past students greeted each other as if it were yesterday.

Alan Galbraith opened the 40 year reunion, providing an engaging introduction and reflecting on the many changes to the campus over the decades. Similarly, James O'Boyle led the introductions for the 60 year reunion, sharing his perspectives on the evolution of the campus and its role in supporting the agri food sector.

We are keen to attract as many past Greenmount students as possible to attend our events. If you know of others, please share this publication with them. Thank you.

Both speakers also offered an overview of the upcoming campus redevelopment, sparking plenty of interest and discussion among attendees. After a nostalgic tour of the student accommodation, the past students of 1985 continued their visit by reconnecting and sharing memories of their time on campus. The Class of '65 was provided with a minibus tour of the Beef and Sheep Centre, where many had previously been involved in fencing the field boundaries. CAFRE Farm Manager, Michael Graham rounded off the tours with an insight into the Dairy Centre.

The reunions were brought to a close with tea and coffee in the Victor Woods Room, where the chat and laughter continued well into the afternoon.

Class of 1985 enjoyed a reunion at Greenmount Campus

Class of 1965 reunite at Greenmount Campus

Practical learning down on the farm

Michael Graham, Farm Manager

Since the first students enrolled at Greenmount on the 8 October 1912, one thing has remained unchanged; the College's farmed estate continues to play a key role in demonstrating the adoption of innovative technologies and practices to students, both past and present.

The changes in agricultural production methods since 1912 could never have been imagined by those first eleven students, or those who have subsequently graduated over the last 114 years. The farmed estate endeavours to continually develop its facilities and infrastructure, demonstrating innovations to students involved in routine practical and skills training sessions, with the farm enterprises generating information for use in student lectures, assignments and presentations.

The development of livestock handling facilities is one such evolving facility. Efficient handling facilities not only makes the collection of performance data extremely labour efficient but also allows collection with a high degree of safety. A recent addition to the Hill Farm Centre has been a new cattle handling yard using the Canadian designed Arrowquip system.

Likewise, developments in farm equipment are utilised across the farm with the use of equipment demonstrating the precision application of nutrients to both grassland and arable crops. Who would have thought, ten years ago, that words such as Isobus and section control would be part of everyday agricultural vocabulary?

The most recent of these equipment developments has been the use of a specialist drill to drill grass seed into established maize crops. This is hoped to reduce the potential of nutrient leaching and soil erosion from maize stubbles post-harvest.

The Dairy Centre at Greenmount Campus provides a practical learning environment for students

Soil health, habitat management and biodiversity are key considerations across all the farmed units with peatland and habitat management being a significant area of work at the Hill Farm. The management of specific areas of the farm for breeding wader birds has been a great success. The Hill Farm also has the highest population density of Irish Hares in Ireland.

The industry has also witnessed vast improvements in livestock genetics across all sectors and Greenmount Campus has demonstrated this in their cattle and sheep enterprises.

Genomic testing has been completed on all breeding stock, enabling targeted use of sexed semen on heifers and cows in both the dairy and beef herds, accelerating genetic improvements and breeding replacements suitable for the system. This programme of work links closely to the Bovine Genetics Project delivered by Sustainable Ruminant Genetics and available to farmers in Northern Ireland.

The favourable spring and summer weather of 2025 provided ideal growing conditions for both grass and arable crops resulting in very good yields of quality crops which has supported very good livestock performance during the summer and the winter of 2025/26.

Unseasonable weather reminds us all how great an impact the weather can have on our daily management of enterprises. It is important that the data generated and management changes implemented are discussed, as we do at CAFRE with students, developing their knowledge and skills for whatever future role their career holds.

Specialised drill planting grass seed into established maize crops

‘First Green’ inspiring
the next generation of Greenkeepers

CAFRE partnered with the British and International Golf Greenkeepers’ Association (BIGGA) to host the global ‘First Green’ initiative, a programme that introduces young people to the world of sports turf management. Rooted in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), the event helped students see how classroom subjects translate into real horticultural and environmental practices.

Past Horticulture graduate, Adam Ferguson, Senior Lecturer welcomes Ballyclare Secondary School pupils to Greenmount’s sports turf facilities

Students from Ballyclare Secondary School were welcomed to Greenmount Campus for a hands-on day exploring the technical and practical aspects of turf care. The programme included activities on turf performance standards, soil health, and biodiversity, along with demonstrations of the specialised tools and machinery used on a golf course. The day finished on a high note with a lively putting challenge, giving students the chance to put their new knowledge and golfing abilities into action.

Senior Lecturer Adam Ferguson said, “We were absolutely delighted to host the BIGGA ‘First Green’ initiative at Greenmount Campus. It was fantastic to see pupils interact with the technical elements of sports turf. They left understanding that sports turf maintenance is so much more than cutting grass!”

Brian Boyle, Horticulture Lecturer demonstrates turf speeds

CAFRE’s golf course proved the perfect setting for this immersive learning experience. With its dedicated greenkeeping and golf facilities, the campus offers a unique outdoor classroom that encourages participation, curiosity, and hands-on exploration, a refreshing change from the traditional school environment.

David Drummond explains how biodiversity can be enhanced around sports areas

David Dowd, Head of Horticulture at CAFRE, added, “The sessions delivered by CAFRE staff aligned with the STEM concepts embedded within Northern Ireland’s school curriculum. The initiative connected directly with what students learn in class.”

Sports turf machinery and greens management were discussed at the ‘First Green’ initiative

Opportunities in Agriculture
Careers Fair

CAFRE hosted its fourth annual 'Opportunities in Employment in Agriculture' careers event at Greenmount Campus.

The objective of the event was to connect students with employers from the agriculture industry who are looking to recruit placement students and/or graduates, either now or in the future. Over 45 exhibitors attended which included small, medium, and large agricultural businesses with a wide range of job roles and placement opportunities available. In his opening address Paul McHenry, CAFRE Director commented,

> "We are very grateful to all the businesses here today which demonstrates the excellent working relationships that have been established with CAFRE. Your attendance will enable all levels of agricultural graduates to kick start their careers. The range of roles on offer is truly outstanding – from production agriculture jobs right through to graduate training programmes within leading agricultural businesses. The future is very bright for all our CAFRE students.."

Daniel Sloane attended the Opportunities in Agriculture Careers Fair to recruit staff for Silver Hill Duck

A wide range of businesses attended, ranging from pig, poultry, milk, meat processing, genetics, feed and retail businesses to name a few. We were delighted to see many past Greenmount students back recruiting for their employers. One such student was Daniel Sloane, now working with Silver Hill Duck.

"The Opportunities in Agriculture Careers Fair provides an excellent opportunity for the Agri-Food Industry to come together under one roof and support the future of the industry. I have attended the event for the past two years on behalf of Silver Hill Duck to promote our business and the career opportunities available. It has proved to be a successful event which has allowed us to recruit a placement student for our Farm Technical department. This has involved time spent on our company owned hatchery, laying site and trial facilities."

"I started my studies at Greenmount Campus, spending two years on campus through the BSc Agricultural Technology course in 2018. I graduated in the summer of 2022 at which point I took up employment with Silver Hill Duck as a Farm Quality Liaison Officer. After this I enrolled in the MSc Business for Agri-Food and Rural Enterprise course on a part time basis, which was delivered at the Loughry Campus in association with Queen's University, Belfast. Two years after my initial employment with Silver Hill Duck I have changed roles carrying out R&D across the agriculture business. Both courses have enabled me to develop my career to the point today. I lead projects with an aim to improve performance across the integrated business."

Horticulture students excel
at WorldSkills UK National Finals

Horticulture students have once again demonstrated their exceptional talent on the national stage, celebrating a remarkable set of results at the WorldSkills UK National Finals.

Four students, Luke Donald, Cameron Gilbert, Rhys Logan and Tiernan Kelly were selected to compete in the highly respected Landscape Gardening category. Over three intense days from 26–28 November 2025, Bridgend College in Wales hosted the final, where eight competitors from across the UK battled for a place on the podium.

CAFRE students delivered outstanding performances, with Luke Donald from Carrickfergus winning Silver, and fellow Carrickfergus student Cameron Gilbert securing Bronze. Rhys Logan, also from Carrickfergus, was highly commended by the judges, while Tiernan Kelly from Newtownards proudly represented CAFRE as a strong finalist. Competitors were tasked with constructing a 12m² landscaping project incorporating paving, fencing, decking, turfing and planting, all within a demanding 17 hour timeframe. Working to precise plans and tight tolerances, the finalists produced impressive gardens that showcased both craftsmanship and creativity. Senior Lecturer Adam Ferguson, who supported the students throughout their journey, praised their dedication:

> “We are incredibly proud of all our CAFRE representatives. Their passion and determination was evident from start to finish. Having four students qualify for a national final is a huge achievement, and securing two podium places is exceptional. This success reflects the students’ hard work and is a tremendous accolade for Horticulture at CAFRE.”

Competing at WorldSkills UK finals Tiernan Kelly, Luke Donald, Rhys Logan and Cameron Gilbert with Senior Lecturer, Adam Ferguson

The students first encountered WorldSkills through their Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Horticulture, where they honed the skills needed for high-level competition. Their training blends hands on practice with strong theoretical knowledge, preparing them to demonstrate professional standards under pressure.

Reflecting on his achievement, Silver Medallist Luke Donald said:

> “Competing last year gave me invaluable experience, and I set myself the goal of winning a medal in 2025. The support from the CAFRE Horticulture team has been incredible, they prepared us brilliantly. WorldSkills UK gave us an amazing platform to test our abilities and learn from industry experts. It’s an experience that will shape our careers.”

Lecturer Martin Wooster, who guided the team through training and competition, highlighted the wider benefits of taking part:

> “WorldSkills helps students showcase their technical skills while also building confidence, resilience and strong communication qualities essential for a successful career in horticulture.”

CAFRE continues to nurture future talent in the sector, offering programmes from Level 2 through to Honours Degree at Greenmount Campus. Those interested in pursuing a career in horticulture can apply now for Level 2 and Level 3 courses at **www.cafre.ac.uk**, or for full-time Foundation Degree and Honours top-up routes via **www.ucas.com**.

Luke Donald proudly displays his Silver Medal winning garden design and build

Industry Supporters acknowledge
Agriculture students' potential

In March, Bursary and Scholarship Awards were presented to students studying on Agriculture degree programmes at CAFRE. Over the years CAFRE students have significantly gained from strong partnerships and generous financial backing offered by Agri-Food companies.

Jade Casement from Castlewellan was presented with the Gibson Trust Bursary from Hugh Ferguson at the CAFRE Industry Support event.

The 2025 Industry Support Programme awarded £30,000 to students studying Agriculture programmes at CAFRE. Students enrolled on the Ulster University validated BSc (Hons) Degree and Foundation Degree Agriculture programmes, and Queen's University Belfast BSc (Hons) Degree in Agricultural Technology programme were eligible to apply. A total of thirteen industry partners supported students through bursary awards, including organisations such as Abbey Autoline, Dale Farm, Danske Bank, Lakeland Dairies, the Ulster Farmers' Union and the Gibson Trust, among others. In addition, scholarship awards were presented to second year students by ABP Food Group, Fane Valley Stores and Pilgrims Europe.

One of the students supported through the bursary programme is Jade Casement from Castlewellan. Jade grew up on a suckler beef and sheep farm, which sparked her interest in agriculture from an early age.

Jade received support through the Gibson Trust's County Down bursary, which has played an important role in helping her manage the transition back into education. Reflecting on the impact of the bursary, Jade said:

> "Starting university at 25 was a big decision for me. It meant going back into education a bit later than most people, and that came with financial pressures and a lot of uncertainty. Because of that, receiving support from the Gibson Trust's bursary has made a real difference. The bursary has helped ease the cost of studying and allowed me to invest in things that genuinely support my learning, including resources to help with my dyslexia and general college expenses. It's taken some of the stress away and allowed me to focus properly on my course."

CAFRE's Head of Agriculture Higher Education, Sharon McLaren thanked the businesses and organisations involved, noting how valuable continued industry support is for agriculture education. She welcomed new partners to the programme and highlighted the mutual benefits for both students and businesses.

CAFRE continues to offer a wide range of full time and part time agriculture courses, from Level 2 through to BSc (Honours) Degree, with opportunities for prospective students to learn more through open days and on campus events.

Turf Matters

Nearly 200 attendees gathered at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) for Turf Matters 2025, co hosted with BIGGA and Golf Ireland. Welcoming guests, Senior Lecturer Adam Ferguson highlighted the conference theme of "Optimising Sustainability in Sports Turf" and emphasised CAFRE's commitment to developing future turf professionals through its apprenticeship programmes.

Adam Ferguson welcomes attendees to Turf Matters 2025

The event opened with presentations from Dr Robbie Fitzpatrick of the GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation and Ann Courtney, Head of Sustainability at Golf Ireland. Dr Fitzpatrick outlined how integrated turfgrass management can support biodiversity, water stewardship, energy efficiency and long term club success, sharing examples from clubs across Ireland. Greenmount Campus was also awarded GEO Certification, recognising its habitat creation, woodland restoration and adoption of fuel saving robotic mowers. The college's partnership with BIGGA and Ballyclare Secondary School was praised as a model for sustainability education.

Ms Courtney introduced Golf Ireland's 'Drive the Green' action plan, which helps clubs protect nature, reduce resource use and develop long-term ecological strategies. She highlighted the Sustainability Leaders programme and the free guidance available to support clubs in meeting GEO standards.

The conference then shifted to championship-level insights. Richard Windows, Assistant Director of Sustainable Agronomy Services at the R&A, shared experiences from preparing major venues including The Open at Portrush. He discussed data-driven agronomy, maintaining consistent green performance and the ecological principles behind the Disturbance Theory.

Graeme Beatt, Course Manager at Royal Portrush Golf Club, offered an insider's view on preparing the Dunluce Links for both the 148th and 153rd Open Championships. He detailed improvements in course firmness, green speed management and the technological advances used during the tournament. The 153rd Open ultimately generated over £213 million in economic benefits for Northern Ireland. Attendees also met with industry suppliers and explored the latest innovations in turf management. Closing the event, Mr Ferguson encouraged delegates to apply the ideas shared throughout the day and continue driving sustainability across the sports turf sector.

For information on CAFRE's sports turf training programmes, contact Adam Ferguson at **Adam.Ferguson@daera-ni.gov.uk** or visit **www.cafre.ac.uk.**

Dr Robbie Fitzpatrick of the GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation and Ann Courtney, Head of Sustainability at Golf Ireland present CAFRE with their GEO Certification

Past Greenmount students deliver at Hill Farm Open Day

In September 2025, Sustainable Land Management Branch organised an all-Ireland, two-day Uplands Symposium and Hill Farm Open Day, showcasing how the uplands can contribute to the delivery of ecosystem services for wider society.

Carolyn Patterson and Patrick Browne, Advisers from Teagasc joined Nicola Warden (Senior Biodiversity Technologist, CAFRE) and Simon Gray, Head of Peatland Recovery, Ulster Wildlife at the peatland restoration stop.

During day one's symposium, attendees heard from a range of industry professionals who are either completing research in the uplands or work closely with the uplands community in Northern Ireland, Ireland or Scotland. The event concluded with a networking dinner, allowing attendees to further discuss the day's presentations.

The second day of the event saw over 260 farmers and agri-professionals participate in a tour of the CAFRE Hill Farm Centre. During the tour attendees heard from CAFRE staff and external professionals on a range of topics which included, Hill Sheep and Habitat Management, Carbon, Peatland Restoration and Hill Cattle and Habitat Recovery. More information on the event can be found on the CAFRE website **www.cafre.ac.uk**

Many CAFRE staff have completed their studies through Greenmount. Two former students helped organise and deliver content at the Hill Farm Open Day - Nicola Warden and Martin Kirk.

Nicola Warden studied a BSc Agricultural Technology with Professional Studies from 2014 to 2018. Nicola commenced employment at CAFRE in January 2020 as a Biodiversity Technologist and since November 2023 has been temporarily promoted into the role of Senior Biodiversity Technologist. Nicola was involved in the organisation of both events and delivered content at the Peatland Restoration stop. Alongside Simon Gray, Head of Peatland Recovery at Ulster Wildlife and two Teagasc advisors Carolyn Patterson and Patrick Browne, the group gave attendees an overview of peatland restoration from planning, implementation to long-term management. Nicola led the session by explaining the restoration work that has been completed at the CAFRE Hill Farm Centre. Nicola described several techniques used to rehabilitate degraded peatland, including the restoration of a previous forestry site to peatland and initiatives aimed at raising the water table to re-establish natural hydrology and conditions associated with peatland formation. Nicola emphasised that restoration is not just about reducing emissions; it also brings significant biodiversity gains. She shared examples of how restored areas have recovered with native plant species returning and wildlife habitats improving.

Stephen Magennis (Conservation Officer, RSPB) and Martin Kirk (Livestock Technologist, CAFRE) provided an insight into the role cattle play in habitat recovery on the CAFRE Hill Farm.

Martin Kirk, also studied for a BSc Agricultural Technology with Professional Studies at Greenmount between 2013 and 2017 before completing a MSc in Business for Agri-Food and Rural Enterprise at Loughry in 2018, subsequently joining CAFRE in April 2019. Martin enjoyed five years as an Air Quality Technologist before moving into the livestock team as a Beef and Sheep Technologist in summer 2024. Martin was involved in providing performance information on the various livestock enterprises at the Hill Farm Centre for the uplands open day. He explained how the less selective grazing behaviour of cattle is being effectively exploited through the integration of virtual fencing technology. This maintains an open, diverse vegetation structure crucial for ground nesting birds. This approach has allowed around twenty-five percent of the suckler herd to be outwintered, in specific areas, creating ideal conditions for breeding waders. Martin highlighted the dual benefits of this approach: it supports the production of commercially viable cattle, meeting market demands at a reduced cost, while also contributing to holistic upland habitat management.

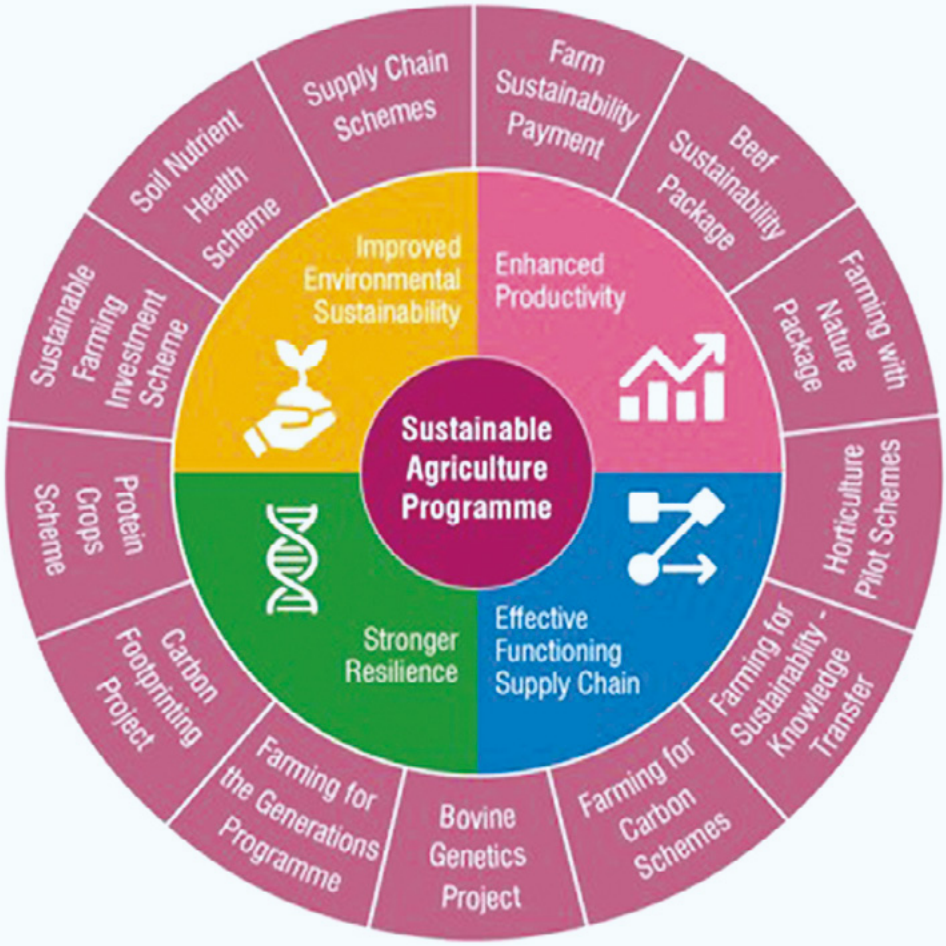
CAFRE Organising committee: Orla Kelly, Nicola Warden, Niamh Woods, Eileen McCloskey and Mark Scott.

Previous Next

Sustainable Agriculture Programme:
Momentum Builds Across Northern Ireland

The rollout of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme (SAP) continues, signalling one of the most significant shifts in Northern Ireland's agricultural policy and practice in a generation. Designed to transition the industry toward greater sustainability, improved resilience, and better environmental outcomes, SAP is already influencing a broad range of farm support, data initiatives and policy direction.

At its core, the vision of SAP is to transition to a more sustainable farming sector by implementing actions, measures and schemes that benefit our climate and environment while supporting our economically and socially significant agri-food sector.



SAP is a roadmap to a more sustainable farming sector.

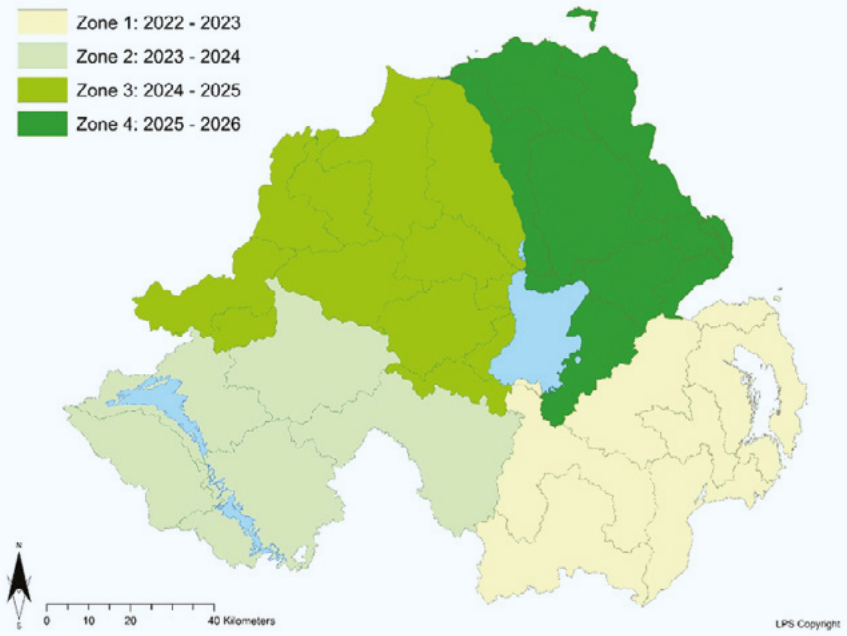
As one of the most significant programmes ever undertaken in Northern Ireland's agricultural policy, the Sustainable Agriculture Programme is influencing how farmers are supported, how data informs decisions, and how sustainability is delivered across the sector.

This feature summarises the programme's progress to date, including schemes already launched, key initiatives for 2026, and the growing engagement from farmers and agri-professionals

Building the Foundations: Data-Enabling Schemes

The SAP places strong emphasis on creating a robust data foundation to support evidence based decision-making and long-term sustainability planning. These data-enabling schemes will inform policy development, underpin future environmental improvements, and support farm businesses in measuring and managing performance.

Previous Next



Soil Nutrient Health Scheme Zones

Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS)

The Soil Nutrient Health Scheme is well underway, with sampling and analysis completed for Zones 1–3, covering approximately 440,000 fields and 22,750 farm businesses, equivalent to 93% of all farms in Northern Ireland. Zone 4 sampling focuses on Co. Antrim and remaining unregistered farms. Although registrations have closed, expressions of interest may still be submitted to **snhs@daera-ni.gov.uk**

Soil Nutrient Health Scheme training is available online via the CAFRE website, with face-to-face sessions held across Northern Ireland, ensuring farmers understand their soil analysis reports and how to apply the findings effectively.

Bovine Genetics Project (BGP)

The Bovine Genetics Project (BGP), which is delivered in partnership with industry through Sustainable Ruminant Genetics (SRG), is focused on delivering more accessible genetic information for farmers to make more informed breeding and enterprise management decisions. By identifying and selecting animals with superior genetics, farmers can accelerate genetic gain, reduce costs, improve sustainability, and build a more productive and resilient herd for future profitability.

A key component of the BGP is the Bovine Genetics Genotyping Scheme (BGGS) which is open from 1 September 2026 until 31 December 2027. The scheme provides financial support to herd keepers to genotype their current breeding animals including future replacements and, from January 2027, all calves which are registered on NIFAIS during the 2027 calendar year. Genotyping improves the accuracy of the assessment of an animal's genetic merit, and can also identify important traits, such as feed efficiency and health-related characteristics, at an earlier stage.

CAFRE will also be providing training to farmers, to enable them to access and make the best use of the information which is now available. This training, which will commence in September 2026, will be delivered through a combination of online and face-to-face formats.

Carbon Footprinting Project (CFP)

Launching later in 2026, the Carbon Footprinting Project will provide whole farm, enterprise level and product level carbon footprints using data collected by LMC and processed through the Carbon Calculator.

CAFRE will deliver dedicated carbon footprinting and carbon mitigation training as part of wider adviser and farmer-facing programmes, supporting farm businesses in understanding carbon reports and identifying practical emission-reduction opportunities.

New and Evolving Payment Schemes

Beef Sustainability Package

Designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance productivity, the Beef Sustainability Package includes both the Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme and the Suckler Cow Scheme.

Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme

The Beef Carbon Reduction (BCR) Scheme continues its phased approach to lowering the maximum slaughter age for clean beef cattle. Year 2, completed in 2025, targeted a maximum age of 28 months, involving 8,200 participating farm businesses and around 264,000 eligible animals. Year 3, launched in January 2026, reduces the maximum slaughter age to 27 months, maintaining a payment of £75 per eligible animal.

Suckler Cow Scheme

Implemented on 1 April 2025, this four-year scheme rewards calving events that meet annual targets for Age at First Calving (AFC) and Calving Interval (CI). Targets tighten progressively, with maximum AFC reducing from 34 months in Year 1 to 29 months in Year 4. Uptake has been strong, with 76% of eligible businesses opted in by December 2025.

Farming with Nature: Restoring Habitats and Landscape Health

The Farming with Nature (FwN) Package includes three strands supporting habitat creation, collaboration, and enhancement of priority habitats. Strand 1 supports hedgerow planting, riparian buffer strips, farmland tree planting, winter stubble retention, multi-species cover cropping, and associated capital items. Strand 2 focuses on landscape-scale collaboration, while Strand 3 will evolve into a successor to EFS Higher.

Farm Sustainability Payment

The Farm Sustainability Payment (FSP) provides a resilient, area based payment while embedding new conditionalities requiring participation in the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme, Bovine Genetics Project and eventually the Carbon Footprinting Project. It also introduces the Historic Years Exercise, progressive capping, and the Farm Sustainability Standards (FSS), replacing Cross-Compliance with seven updated standards covering water, biodiversity, soil protection, animal welfare and traceability.

Penalties for non-compliance begin in 2027 for Soil Nutrient Health Scheme and 2028 for Bovine Genetics Project, increasing annually until conditionalities are met.

Knowledge Transfer and Innovation – the core of CAFRE's contribution

Knowledge Transfer and Innovation are central to ensuring that SAP is not just a policy framework, but a practical and achievable pathway for farmers. CAFRE's role is crucial in equipping farmers, advisers and industry stakeholders with the skills, confidence and understanding required to benefit from SAP's wide-ranging schemes.

Business Sustainability Groups (BSGs)

Since their launch in 2025, 1,449 farm businesses have enrolled in Business Sustainability Groups. These groups foster peer learning, benchmarking and practical discussion, helping farmers interpret new data sources such as SNHS results and prepare for scheme conditionalities.

Suckler Cow Fertility Groups

Supporting the delivery of the Suckler Cow Scheme, these groups involve 400 farms participating in eight structured on-farm sessions over two years. The focus is on genetics, fertility, herd performance and sustainable production.

B.E.E.F. Groups

Launched in January 2026, B.E.E.F. Groups help farmers meet the targets of the Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme through on-farm learning, performance analysis and peer discussion.

Level 2 Agricultural Business Operations course

The Level 2 Certificate in Agricultural Business Operations training will be delivered one night per week over 20 weeks from September 2026 to the end of February 2027. Course Manager, Kenneth Johnston advises "the course will be available at the three CAFRE campus locations with classes in beef, sheep, crops and dairying being offered."

The 2025 Fermanagh Rose Caoimhe Connolly [pictured] from Roslea completed the beef production course at Enniskillen Campus said "I really enjoyed the course and learned a lot from it.

The course suited me as it was held in the evenings and was close to home. I have always had a keen interest in beef and sheep production having grown up on the home farm where we have suckler cows and ewes. I always wanted to be involved in agriculture but on leaving school I went to John Moores' University in Liverpool where I obtained a first-class honours degree and I now work as a tax accountant with Cavanagh Kelly in Dungannon. I decided to apply for the Level 2 ABO course as I didn't have an agricultural qualification, and I can truly say that it was one of the best decisions I have made.

It was great to meet up with other like-minded people with different backgrounds and reasons to be there. I was really surprised and greatly encouraged to see so many girls on the course. While I enjoyed the whole course, I especially enjoyed the Livestock Production module. I have no hesitation in recommending the course to anyone interested in agriculture and hoping to achieve a worthwhile qualification."

Caoimhe Connolly and her dad pictured at the Level 2 Awards evening with Kenneth Johnston, Rodney Brown (Head of Agri Business Danske Bank) and Gavin Duffy.

For more information please get in touch with us at the Greenmount Association

Email: greenmountassociation1@gmail.com

Do you know someone completing school or university this year?

Courses available at CAFRE from Level 2 through to Master's Degree.

Scan the QR code for more information:

Previous