



# RIDGE TO RIVER

## Welcome from Del Jones Programme Manager

Welcome to the first issue of the Ridge to River newsletter, which will provide you with regular updates about the project and the work we are doing collectively to transform the area.

Firstly, thank you to everyone who agreed for local botanist, Stuart Hedley, to carry out surveys of existing priority habitats. Stuart worked hard to complete the work in August and has now provided data that we will incorporate into the digital mapping.

We are delighted to have appointed Farmacy as consultants for carrying out a baseline soil health assessment and BH Wildlife Consultancy to carry out a drone survey of the deer population in the project area.

Tenders are out to complete woodland condition assessments, providing a baseline for those seeking to consider woodland management options that could lead to an uplift in biodiversity or carbon sequestration.

Herefordshire Archaeology have been carrying out a Historic Environment review and one of the things I have been taken aback by is the sheer depth of heritage that exists within the landscape. The layers of history and generations of farmers that the natural landscape has supported is awe inspiring. The findings will be used to discuss options that could be taken up by farmers as part of their Land Management Plan, or provide a better understanding of what historical features are present on the farm.

Last, but not least, we are in the process of appointing a company to develop the Ridge to River website and we look forward to sharing that with you in the not to distant future!



## Hydrological & Peat Surveys of the Flits SSSI

The Flits SSSI is a unique lowland Fen created because of the last glacial retreat. We are hoping to understand more about the complex geology and hydrology and how it influences the flora and fauna found at the site.

In August, we appointed Hafren Water, to carry out a hydrological and hydrogeological survey. They are drawing up a monitoring programme, and we will soon be installing a series of dipwells and flow monitors to derive a better understanding of how groundwater flows through the site.

In addition, Atmos Consulting completed peat depth surveys which yielded interesting results. Peat depths ranged from 25cm in the north of the site, to over 3m towards the south. These unusual depths represent a significant carbon store within the project area, with typical peat soils storing between 30kg to 70kg of carbon per m<sup>3</sup>, although this can significantly increase depending upon the condition of the site.

## Deer Drone Surveys

We will soon be in touch to request permission to fly over farms to capture data for the deer population surveys. BH Wildlife Consultancy will be carrying out the drone surveys this winter and next, using a high-spec thermal imaging and high-definition camera.



They will also be completing a deer impact assessment of the woodland that will help us to understand deer numbers and their movements. The results will provide evidence to inform and develop a project wide control programme.

## Whole Farm Plans

We are in the process of appointing a farm advisor to work with all Moccas Estate tenants and private landowners in the project area. Once appointed, they will work to understand individual requirements and develop farmer-led plans. The farm advisor will work alongside the Duchy's Senior Future Farming Advisor, Joe Haseley, who will continue to work with all Duchy tenants.

We will be contacting you shortly to begin developing farm plans, starting with mapping all the existing natural capital on the farm to create a baseline for the Land Management Plan. This will be followed by opportunity mapping.

Please remember that this is a project that needs to be co-designed, and align with your aspirations for what the landscape looks like in 20 years time.

## Soil Health Baseline



Our newly appointed soil health consultants, Farmacy and their subsidiary, Healthy Soils, have unrivalled experience in supporting farmers to better understand their soil and give practical advice on how to unlock their potential.

With your support, we can use Farmacy's TerraMap technology to map the entire farmed project area. This will enable us to create an accurate baseline which can be used as a benchmark for developing nutrient markets, that could lead to significant financial backing. In addition, Farmacy will also be supporting farmers and growers to complete comprehensive nutrient management plans.

We appreciate that many of you may already have live nutrient management plans, and we hope that combining them with TerraMapping will help identify additional efficiency savings for farm businesses.

## Save the Date – Monday 25th November

### Ridge to River Farm Cluster Meeting, Moccas Village Hall

Don't forget to register for the next meeting, where you will meet our new Ridge to River Farm Advisors: Jade Prince and Ian Roberston from Farmacy; Ben Nott from the Wye and Usk Foundation; and Nick Hinchliffe from Catchment Sensitive Farming. There will be also be presentations from Farmacy, and Wildfarmed. Register at: [tinyurl.com/4b7kfp86](https://tinyurl.com/4b7kfp86)

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at: [djones@ridgetoriver.org.uk](mailto:djones@ridgetoriver.org.uk)