

Social Farming Across Borders Pilot Farm Profile:

Section 1 – Your Details

<p>Name:</p> <p>Seaghan McDermott</p> 	<p>Address:</p> <p>Lisdonwilly Rd., Armagh</p>  <p>View from home</p>
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Section 2 – Your Farm

About my Farm:

Little Acres lies just north of Armagh town and although it's close to the town, you still feel deep in the countryside when on the farm.

We have around 90 acres on 3 different sites all within half a mile of each other.

Being a former dairy farm there are a few sheds and buildings at the yard with the old family dwelling that is not in use but would make a great renovation project.

This part of the farm has around 30 acres attached and is where the small animals are kept, we have a few goats, two donkeys (Eddie and Roy), a sheep, and newly added rabbits to the collection, hens, dogs and a cat.

The animals only take up a small portion of the land here so the rest is rented out to another farmer who grows grass, wheat, maize and vegetables.

Also attached to this part is the 11 acres of woodland where we intend to develop a nature project, there is river frontage at the trees which also has potential.

Another 30 acres lies just down the road and is let entirely for vegetables and it also runs alongside the Callan River. Then we have the remaining piece of the farm where the allotment site is.

We have 28 plots and the potential to expand if needed. This is where the social farm will be centred

On site we have a communal shed where we can do inside projects when the weather is bad, toilets and car park.

Also a large pile of 6 yr old spent mushroom compost still remains and is free to the plot holders.

We also have a poly tunnel where there will be a project growing tomatoes and strawberries.

A small piece of land adjoining the plots has been cultivated for growing sunflowers this will be a very visually imperative part of the site as they grow quickly and have a striking presence.



Farm Activities offered to the Participants:



As I have mentioned before the allotment site will be the hub of the project this means we will spend most of the time here preparing soil, sowing seed, maintain plants watering etc. On occasion we will help out on the plots when some of the plot holders need it. There will be a small bit of hedge trimming and general maintenance to undertake also.

I intend to allocate a small piece of the site to each of the participants so they can, with my help, tend to their own little patch.

In the better weather we will be setting up a small area at the allotments to handle and keep the animals so they will be on site and the participants will be integral to the whole project from, building the fences to moving and looking after the animals.

In the woodland I will be constructing a few path ways and putting in a couple of drainage channels, and undertaking river bank stabilisation via the planting of willows and this will be something the participants will be involved in.

With SOFAB's help I will be able to have a canteen where we can go and eat lunch and have a cup of tea when needed.

If we are at the woods we will probably just go into the house for tea as it is close to the trees.

We have so much more to offer participants but I feel as a starting point the allotments will be a great place to get acquainted with the farm.



Geoff's' plot



10yr old plantation.



Holly, Bramble & kids



5wk old New Zealand rabbits

Preferred days of the week:

Tuesday to Friday (inclusive)

Projects on-going at the moment:

Clearing the poly-tunnel: getting ready for the new plants coming in.
Restoring the path ways at the allotments.
Clipping the hedges back.
Looking after the animals goes on all the time.

Section 3 – Your Locality & Community

Nearest Services:

We have a small shop locally with all the necessary every day things.
Fane Valley is also a short distance away, which is where I get all my agri supplies for the farm.
Vets, doctors, schools, chemists, post office's, pubs, leisure centres, sports clubs, banks and hospitals, are all in Armagh town.

Nearest town: Armagh town

Nearest public transport or rural transport initiative: Ulster bus passes the end of our road at the Lisdonwilly rd / Loughgall rd junct.
Also Armagh rural transports' offices close by in Armagh.

My locality and community interests :

We Hold a barbeque 2/3 times a year at the allotments and invite all the plot holders their families and friends along. We get a great turn out of people and all have a great time.
Me and my wife Joanne are members of the St Malachys PS PTA and would be involved in fund raising activities for the school.
My family and a few friends represent Lisdonwilly in the Grange, Town Land Quiz, we made it to the final this year only to be beaten again!, the quiz promotes the names of the local town lands that we no longer tend to use and in doing so brings the local community together at the Grange GAA Social club where we are well known.

Images from my door step in and around Armagh



R C Cathedral



C O I Cathedral



Planeterium



Navan Fort



Armagh is'nt called the Orchard county for nothing!



Section 4 – You, the Farmer

Me and my Farm:

I was born on the farm and back then it was a dairy farm with beef cattle also. I grew up here and got to know every inch of the place and it is essentially now a part of me. I am the 5th generation of the Mc Dermott's to farm in our townland and have a pride in the fact we have been here since the early 1800's.

I worked on the farm from I was very young, I went to Loughry Agricultural college after school and then on to Armagh Tech for 2 yrs all the while working away. I started to run the farm in 1990 and increased the size of the herd from 30 cows up to 70 until we sold the herd in 2002.

I always maintained an interest in different ways of doing things and keep an open mind as to the methods of today. In 2009 I opened the allotment site to better utilise the land and it turned out to be a great success, I can see participants getting so much out of their time here as the social element surrounding the allotments and the plot holders is a key part of its success.

I live here with my wife Joanne and my two children, Joanne is from an accountancy background and is integral to the business, she has a keen eye for gardening and was a great source of motivation when moving in the direction of social farming as her younger cousin who has special needs got so much stimulation partaking in the riding for the disabled just a mile away. We saw first-hand the positive effects this had on her cousin and realised that we could create something special here for people.

We now rent out most of the farm and keep only a few animals as pets really, although rearing them still needs the same level of expertise and commitment. During my time since selling the herd I have had many different experiences and can see that there has been a shift away from the country way of life, so looking at the farm and the land I can see a great opportunity to utilise it in a way that will hopefully reconnect people with this way of life. Coming from a family of teachers, mother, 2 aunts, uncle, cousin and sister, I have been in many teaching environments outside my own schooldays, this has taught me many things with regard to the way to treat and handle people in varying situations.

I have also hosted a few farm walks from the local schools and found this a both challenging but rewarding experience.

Taking people with learning difficulties or mental health problems on to the farm will be something new to me but as the time has gone by I am becoming more confident in myself and my ability to be able to accommodate the participants.

Around our Farm



Bridge to the trees



Break in the trees



Allotment site at the out set, now doubled in size



Bit of Callan river frontage typical of all 3 parts of the farm.



We now have 4 adults and 7 kids!!



Cattle add to the mix



And a few more

"I want the farm to be a place where people can go at their own pace and become comfortable being here and hopefully anyone who spends time here will always want to come back."