



FORDHALL FARM AND FENNS MOSS NNR VISITS, Shropshire.

TUESDAY 25TH AUGUST 2009

(Outline Programme).

IOTA (the Institute of Organic Training and Advice) and VINE are organising a farm visit to Fordhall Farm and Fenns Moss, Shropshire on Tuesday 25th August 2009. The day will focus on some of the many sustainability issues that are currently confronting livestock production, grassland management and nature conservation in the UK.

The Fordhall visit, apart from looking at farming in a changing climate and energy conscious world, will also include consideration of the farm's long established foggage system for overwintering their animals using minimum inputs of fossil fuel (ie 'zero-mowing'). Charlotte Hollins, who, along with her brother Ben, rents Fordhall, will lead the farm walk and explain their experiences in setting up the Fordhall Community Land Initiative, which has resulted in the farm being bought by a process of public subscription, and given them, as tenants, over 8,000 landlords. The ability of organic farming methods to sequester excess atmospheric carbon by building reserves of soil organic matter will probably be another key topic for discussion. www.fordhallfarm.com

The Fenns Moss visit during the afternoon will again discuss soil carbon stores (the peat bog) and how global green issues might affect the management of the site for its specific nature conservation objectives. This requires the use of large fuel hungry machines (or "Tonka toys" as Joan Daniels, the site's manager likes to call them!) to 'graze' the shrub and tree growth rather than using animals! This 'control' of the growth of successional vegetation is becoming a huge issue for nature reserves across the UK, wherever species-rich habitat can only be maintained by continual removal of scrub and woodland.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/nnr/1006173.aspx>

Contributors:

Contributors during the day will be Bill Grayson (OCIS adviser and conservation grazing management specialist), Michael Whithouse (IOTA member and formerly Fordhall trustee), Joan Daniels (Natural England's Reserve Manager; and John Bacon (VINE Chair, ex NE Senior Land Manager).

The event is free to IOTA and VINE members, although there will be a charge for lunch and refreshments and some of the Fordhall staff time. Numbers are strictly limited on a first come, first served basis. Final bookings for IOTA members should be given to Sarah Jameson iota@organicadvice.org.uk and for VINE members to Bill Grayson billgrayson@farmersweekly.net all by 17th August.

Outline arrangements (provisional):

- meet at Fordhall Farm, nr Market Drayton, north Shropshire at 10.00 for a 10.15 start.
- farm walk 10.15 to 12.15.
- discussions 12.30 - 14.00 whilst eating lunch.
- 14.00 to 14.45 travel to Fenns Moss NNR, nr Whitchurch, north Shropshire.
- 14.45 to 16.30 walk out to centre of Fenns Moss NNR in company of Joan Daniels Natural England's Site Manager.
- 16.30 – 17.00 approx - depart.

(N.B. Full details and confirmed arrangements will be sent to those who apply).