



SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

Welcome to our April Newsletter

We're excited to share our April update, bringing you the latest developments from March and a look ahead to what's coming up.

In April, we're welcoming new contractors, launching our new website, and hosting workshops we'd love you to attend. Stay tuned for all the details!

Soil health specialists Terraformer conduct a site visit at Rob Hale's Tremelethan Farm, St Mary's



The Small is Beautiful website is Live!

We are delighted to announce that the Small is Beautiful website is now live, providing an overview of the project and our vision for the future. You will also find information about organisations we are working with, opportunities for investment and all the latest news.

Looking ahead we will be adding more resources and project updates (including this newsletter!).



SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

OUR VISION WORKING TOGETHER FUNDING & CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS NEWS RESOURCES CONTACT



Please visit us at:

www.smallisbeautiful.org.uk

Welcoming our contractors: Terraformer

In mid-March, we welcomed Terraformer to the Isles of Scilly as part of their work on developing a Regenerative Growing Guide for Narcissi Cropping & Soil Health. This initiative is designed to support sustainable flower farming practices while enhancing soil health on farms.

A huge thank you to the local farmers and growers who generously hosted site visits during Terraformer's time on the islands. These visits provided invaluable insights into current growing conditions and helped shape discussions on disease management, nutrient planning, and regenerative cropping techniques.

Terraformer will return soon, and we'll be inviting additional flower farmers to host site visits and share their experiences.

If we haven't been in touch with you yet, rest assured we will be soon. If you'd like to get involved sooner, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Next Steps:

- ✓ **Plan the next site visits** to continue gathering local knowledge and refining recommendations.
- ✓ **Start to analyse findings** from grower discussions and industry best practices.
- ✓ **Develop tailored recommendations** for improving narcissi cultivation while enhancing soil health.

We will keep growers updated as this work progresses and look forward to sharing key findings and practical solutions in the coming months.

If you have any further insights, questions, or would like to be involved in future discussions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



Visiting Merv Bird at Pelistry Farm, St Mary's



Meeting the team at Churchtown Farm, St Martin's

Welcoming our contractors: Arable Surveys

Over the coming weeks, we'll be starting baseline surveys of arable plants. These surveys will help us understand which rare and special species are currently present and identify opportunities to support their recovery through land management.

Dave Mawer will be in touch with you to arrange access for these visits and to discuss how this project can support your efforts to protect these valuable plants.

Here's what to expect:

- Survey visits will be arranged directly with you – Dave will be in touch.
- The team will be wearing bright green hats – so you, your family or your team can easily recognise them out in the field.
- There will usually be someone available to chat during the survey, so please feel free to ask questions or reach out to Dave at any time.

Meet the Survey Team

Ian Bernalick

An experienced botanist based in Cornwall, Ian will be leading the surveys. Expect to see him with his head down, scanning the soil!

“As a botanist based in Cornwall, I'm excited to be supporting this important project. My focus will be on identifying the arable plants growing in cultivated fields, track edges and disturbed ground across the islands. Many of these plants are rare or declining, so it's essential we understand where they're surviving and in what conditions. I'll be working closely with the team to build a better picture of the current state of Scilly's arable flora.”



Rosemary Parslow

Supporting the project remotely from her farm in Cornwall, Rosemary brings a wealth of expertise. She carried out the last major arable plant surveys on the islands in 2004–2005 and is delighted to be contributing her knowledge to this new phase of work.

“I'm thrilled to be involved once again with arable plant surveys on the Isles of Scilly. I have many fond memories of discovering rare species and learning more about the island's unique farmland flora. From my home in Cornwall, I'll be offering advice and support as the team carries out this new phase of work. It's a pleasure to reconnect with the islands and contribute to conserving some of the most special arable plants in the country.”



Meet the Survey Team (cont.)

Liz Askins

Liz will be shadowing Ian and will follow up with you after the surveys. She'll be sharing findings and discussing training and support with plant identification.

“I'm joining the team to help bridge the gap between botanical recording and practical support for land managers. I'll be following up with farmers after the surveys to share what we've found and explore ways we can help with identification and training. Understanding what's growing on your land is key to supporting biodiversity – and we're here to help you do just that.”



Project Officer, Dave Mawer says:

“This is an exciting opportunity to see where our precious arable plants, which my ancestors referred to as weeds, survive and even thrive alongside current farming practices. The expert advice Rosemary, Ian and Liz bring will inform management options, that will be available FROM Small is Beautiful, to increase opportunities for these plants, some of which fortunately survive for decades in the seed bank, even under grass.”



Team members will wear brightly coloured hats to ensure they are easily identifiable while on your land.

Keeping the Isles of Scilly Buzzing: A Beekeeper's Perspective

by *Jilly Halliday, Tresco Island Ltd and beekeeper on the Isles of Scilly*

I've lived on the Isles of Scilly for the past six years, and in that time, I've learned so much, not only about bees, but also about the strength of our island community. Working alongside fellow beekeepers here is always a joy. We're all on the same page: we want to protect our honeybees. It's in all our interests, and the shared sense of purpose creates a real buzz, quite literally, as we work together to safeguard Scilly as a haven for pollinators.

The honeybee is more than just a hardworking pollinator; it's a sentinel species, a guardian of the wider environment. Here on Scilly, honeybees don't just keep gardens blooming and crops thriving; they act as early warning systems, alerting us to environmental changes and threats that could affect all pollinators.

That's why protecting them matters so much. While *Varroa* is a devastating global pest for honeybees, it's not the only threat. Other pathogens and diseases, potentially brought in through imported bees or contaminated equipment, could seriously upset the delicate ecological balance that makes the islands so special. Our goal is to protect **all** pollinators – from butterflies and hoverflies to solitary bees and our precious bumbles, by keeping those threats from ever reaching our shores.

Thankfully, local beekeepers are already leading the way. Through careful hive management and strong collaboration, we've kept Scilly *Varroa*-free - a rare achievement anywhere in the world.

Keeping the Isles of Scilly Buzzing: (cont.)

But to keep it that way, we need support from the whole community. Whether you're a beekeeper, gardener, or visitor, everyone has a role to play. That means practising good biosecurity, avoiding the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals, and supporting local bees.

We also maintain sentinel hives on all five inhabited islands. These help us track bee health and detect any early signs of disease or pollution. Honey analysis tells us what the bees are foraging on, helping guide future planting and habitat work. We can even monitor pollutants like microplastics and track pathogens that could affect other wild pollinators.

A key way to protect bees and other pollinators is to stop importing bees. By focusing on locally bred, well-adapted honeybees, we reduce risk and build a more resilient future for all island pollinators.

This summer, you might spot researchers and bee scientists out and about - do say hello! You can even join in the *'Game of Drones'* where we use synthetic queen pheromones to attract male bees across the water from neighbouring islands. It's a fascinating glimpse into bee behaviour and island ecology.

Protecting the Isles of Scilly for bees and pollinators isn't just about bees. It's about safeguarding the biodiversity, agriculture, and natural beauty that define island life, for today, and for generations to come.

It's a real privilege to be part of this. I love working with our community to help keep the Isles of Scilly buzzing.



Jaelyn (left) joins Jilly at the B4 Bees symposium

Partner Update: Jacob Blackett, Isles of Scilly National Landscape

The primary purpose of the Isles of Scilly National Landscape Partnership (formally Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) is to "conserve and enhance natural beauty". This broad remit includes protecting our exceptional wildlife, celebrating Scillonian culture and heritage, maintaining the unique landscape character and promoting access to the landscape.



**Isles of Scilly
National
Landscape**

Throughout the Small is Beautiful (SisB) development phase, the National Landscape Partnership (currently 16 organisations and representatives) has worked closely with the Small is Beautiful team to identify where the project can support the aims of the existing National Landscape Management Plan, and the role it will play in the next Management Plan, due to be launched in the spring of 2026.

Through the coordinating role that the National Landscape Partnership plays, partner organisations and others aim to conserve and enhance natural beauty individually and in collaboration. Small is Beautiful will be an excellent vehicle to significantly further the aims of the Isles of Scilly National Landscape Partnership, and therefore benefit the landscape of Scilly in general.

Partner Update: Jacob Blackett (cont.)

Farming and growing is recognised as integral to the culture, heritage and landscape value of Scilly. Supporting land managers to use regenerative practices to improve soil health, restore habitats to benefit biodiversity, and improving access routes for residents and visitors is essential if we are all to achieve the collective aims of maintaining and enhancing the special qualities of the landscape.

The successful implementation of the National Landscape's Farming in Protected Landscapes programme since 2021 has helped farmers and growers across Scilly deliver great projects for nature, climate, people and place. Now the Small is Beautiful programme, if successful, is poised to offer improved payment rates and provide longer-term agreements, which would allow stronger support for land managers to deliver locally-led action.

Introducing Sue Padfield, Duchy Family Farming Ambassador

The Duchy is delighted to announce that Sue Padfield has been appointed as the Duchy Family Farming Ambassador, providing wellbeing and mental health support to all Duchy farmers. Sue looks forward to meeting those she hasn't yet met on Scilly. We asked Sue to tell us a bit about herself.

"My farming journey began in 1997, marrying into the Padfield family who have farmed in Somerset for four generations. Not being from farming stock, and having left an administrative career in the city, there was much for me to learn!

Today, Jeremy and I, along with our two daughters, are Duchy tenants, LEAF demonstration farmers and a satellite farm for the Agri Epi Centre, providing test beds for companies to gather data on new agricultural technology.

We embrace all the positive connections to farming and the community that it brings. Diversifications, community engagement and regenerative farming have been a very important part of managing our arable and beef enterprises. It is these that have helped keep the farm thriving and us positively focused on the future, especially in these challenging times.

During lockdown I developed an interest in growing cut flowers for local wholesale, small weddings and gift bouquets, so I was delighted to visit beautiful St Marys and chat to some of you over lunch at the end of January.

Being asked to become a Family Farming Ambassador for the Duchy was most welcome. As a team we hope to help amplify and improve support to wellbeing and good mental health for tenant farmers and their families. This is a role I see naturally evolving to suit the engagement I have with tenants and support groups across the region."



Sue is available to family members for a confidential chat and to help signpost to appropriate support.

You can contact Sue by phone: 07823 931 655 or email: farmingfamily@duchyofcornwall.org.

Stay in touch

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the topics in this newsletter, please get in touch:

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