

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS FORUM REPORT -December 2024

Our December meeting was very sociable and generally positive. We celebrated the recent publication of Martyn's climate-solutions letters in the Teesdale Mercury with mulled apple juice punch !

Members who had attended the North Pennines AONB 'Nature and Farming' talk reported that the speaker, farmer Nic Rennison, has planted 2m wide hedges for shelter and replaced ancient hedgerows on old boundaries to create 28 small fields. The farm uses a grazing rotation system for 80 beef cattle, moved every day into a new field and followed by hens sheltering in wheeled hen-houses, towed at night into the field vacated by the cattle. They use no feedstuffs, grains or fertilisers and their animals are kept indoors for a maximum 6 weeks each year. They have joined a collective of over 200 'Regenerative Farming' businesses and are supported by Countryside Stewardship payments and the Woodland Trust.

We discussed 'Good News' items that had cheered us:

- Baby kangaroo 'poo' added into animal feeds is being demonstrated to reduce cows' methane emissions;
- Humpback whales are adapting to diminishing fish stocks by excreting nutrients that feed mackerel shoals;
- Acoustic monitoring suggests that numbers of the largest and one of the most endangered species on earth, the Blue Whale, may be increasing in the Indian Ocean;
- University researchers will spend 20 years monitoring climate adaptation and habitat restoration in North Yorkshire's largest broadleaf forest being planted in Snaizeholme near Hawes;
- Discoveries of unknown species and others thought to be extinct include a 'Golden Mole', an octopus, the 'Sierra Nevada' Red Fox, types of lobster, medicinal fungi and previously unknown bacteria;
- A 2-day blockage of the world's largest coal port in Australia attracted about 3000 activists including a 97-year old grandfather;
- Tylos, the Greek island that became a conservation zone for wildlife in the 1980s, has become a 'zero-waste' community by recycling absolutely everything;

We were disappointed to learn that the group's 'Pollinator Park' proposed partners are now unable to support our project. Refusing to be daunted, we agreed that in 2024 we will pursue alternative ways of planting for wildlife on sites around Barnard Castle. We hope to recruit more u3a members to help us so anyone who is interested should contact Kate Bailey, the group convenor. You will be very welcome to join our 1st February meeting !