



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

EAST LoTHIAN

1st Meeting Report

11 January 2023



Castleton

Soil health is the driving force at Castleton.

Over 30 members of the farming community attended the meeting at Castleton Farm on the 11th of January 2023. We were lucky to have sunshine on the day.

Castleton is farmed by Stuart McNichol alongside his father, Bill who works part-time. Stuarts wife Jo runs the agritourism side of the business at the successful DRIFT. coffeehouse just along from the farm.



Stuart gave us an insight into his system with an overview of the crops he grows, the grain shed and the equipment he uses. Stuart currently collects a wide variety of data but would like to make the best use of it. This is something attendees noted as a possible focus for the Monitor Farm going forward.

There is a strong focus on soil health at Castleton and Stuart already takes steps to reduce compaction. Attendees agreed soil health is one of the most important assets on the farm and should be further improved.

AHDB were also there to give the attendees an update on the current market as part of their roadshow.

FARM FACTS

- **164** hectares total
- **110** of Cereals
- **20** of other crops
- **16** of potatoes
- **10** of permanent pasture
- **8** of woodland and tracks



Priorities going forward

PRIORITIES

After visiting the farm, attendees took part in a workshop to look at the possibilities. In addition to the key priorities, the project could also consider:

- Reducing the fertiliser strategy
- Running more sheep on the land
- Renewable schemes

Jo gave us a quick insight into to the agritourism side of the business and some of the attendees identified an opportunity for farm to fork, from Castleton to DRIFT.

There were some great ideas to take away from the afternoon session but everyone agreed that the enthusiasm of Stuart and family will set them well on the path to success.

PRIORITY: Soil Health

- Gain a deeper understanding of the soil types on the farm and how these can be optimised

PRIORITY: Utilisation of data

- Currently have great data collection
- Need to find ways to apply the data to decision making

PRIORITY: Soil sampling vs plant requirements

- Currently soil sampling and using variable rate
- Possibility to look direct at plant needs in the growing crop



NEXT STEPS

Over the next few months, the Monitor Farm project at Castleton will be:

- Collecting and collating data and information on the Monitor Farm.
- Establishing the Management Group and wider Community Group who will provide support, gain knowledge, and meet like-minded people.
- Working with the two other Monitor Farms in the South cluster— Cowbog in Roxburghshire and Barnbackle in Dumfriesshire.
- Arranging a South Cluster meeting open to all.



The Management Group will meet throughout the year where attendees will get a fuller picture of all the farm enterprises. The group will also set meeting topics for the coming year.



Farm businesses can sign up to be part of the Management Group. Participants should be willing to supply their own farm data, information, and ideas.

This should lead to change and better resilience for the Monitor Farmer and themselves. Individuals can also join the wider Community Group to keep in touch with the project and receive event invites.

@monitorfarmscotland
#monitorfarm26



**To find out more or to sign up -
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