



## FARMING IN THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS: CASE STUDY SERIES



Chris Evans  
Myndtown Farm  
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## INTRODUCTION

Chris Evans is an upland livestock farmer and member of the Upper Onny Farmers Group. The group focuses on ensuring viable upland livestock farms and producing good food in a way that works alongside nature and benefits the environment, landscape and people.

## BACKGROUND

Chris has been managing Myndtown Farm on the Plowden Estate and taking it through an ambitious regenerative process.

He has been working with different organisations and initiatives to support his vision for the farm, including the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) programme, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), CPRE, The National Trust and the Severn Rivers Trust.

As a part of a regenerative process, he has been developing the different parts of the farm to function as an ecological and productive farming system:

***“We’ve managed the farm using regenerative farming practices, aimed to improve soil health, biodiversity using creative solutions...and make a living.”***

His cattle and sheep are a part of this system, integrated within a rotational grazing set up to allow for grass to replenish as stock is moved through.

In addition to this, he has planted 150 native hardwood trees, restored historic hedgerows and created small areas where scrub is being allowed to regenerate as habitat. Permanent grassland boundaries and fencing along the River Onny have been part of the water management plan to establish a riparian corridor. Settling pools in high volume runoff areas have been integrated to improve the health of the river.

All of these elements create nature corridors and support the ecosystem of the farm and surrounding landscape. Baseline testing, including carbon sequestration measures are a part of the process.

***“It is to prove that agriculture can contribute significantly towards net zero in 2050. This isn’t just some side hustle.”***

## AT A GLANCE

- Located at the South Western end of the Long Mynd
- Part of the Plowden Estate and in a Contract Farming Agreement
- 703 acres: with 360 acres classified as Severely Disadvantaged (SDA) and 343 acres of lowland pasture
- 100 suckler cow (Stabiliser and Sussex)
- 400 Lleyen and Romney x Lleyen ewes
- Farm managed using regenerative farming practices to improve soil health, biodiversity and to create resilience



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## THE LONG MYND

The Long Mynd is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): a protected area designated for its unique flora, fauna, geology, or geomorphology, playing a vital role in nature conservation.

By bringing cattle onto the Long Mynd, Chris will be testing the cows' ability to control bracken, enhance plant growth to support biodiversity and habitat, and improve water management.

This process will involve a gradual reduction and removal of the sheep and the introduction on cattle into the system on a rotational grazing system.

***"The plan is to start them on the the Northern end of the Long Mynd and and steadily march them across to the Southern end."***

What is unique about this approach on the Long Mynd is that Chris will be using technology to manage the grazing perimeter, and the cows will be fitted with electronic collar that will signal an 'invisible fence'.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Mynd Town Farm has started to engage more widely with the community, partly as a way to showcase its management approach, but also to increase public awareness of where our food comes from and how that exists as a part of our environmental context.

Something as simple as signage has helped to highlight features of the farm as a way for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage.

Chris has held tree and hedge planting days with volunteers, and facilitated farm walks and school visits. He is eager to work more with schools and groups, and to host events on-site that make best use of the farm setting. Chris hopes to set up a classroom space to encourage more on-farm learning for young visitors.

## FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

This is a National Government programme to provide funding for farmers in Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) to support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage and to protect or improve the quality and character of the landscape or place.

At Myndtown Farm, the programme has helped Chris to plant 2000m of new hedgerows and 200 native trees (e.g. English Oaks). As part of his livestock management, the funding has supported the installation of 5000m of permanent 4-stand electric fence, a solar pump and infrastructure on top of the Long Mynd and the purchase of no-fence cattle collars. This support has been central to not only improving the farm business, but supporting a valuable ecological transition between the farm and the Long Mynd SSSI.

## CONSERVATION

Chris' plans with the CSHT programme include creating 28Ha of Lowland Wood Pasture and managing areas of Lowland Meadow as priority habitat.

***"We have quite a few water meadows that we won't be ploughing up. So that's part of the native breed to risk program"***

These wetlands are for habitat restoration for Lapwing, Curlew and Snipe.

Restoration and conservation are not only focused on the ecological aims, but also the cultural and historic features. Chris has undertaken the restoration of traditional orchards on the property that were present on the 1st edition OS maps, pre dating 1880. He envisions this as a space to engage with the community through events, like pressing days and cider making courses.

