

THE FARMING COMMUNITY NETWORK

AN INVITATION TO VETERAN FARMERS IN NORTH DEVON

My name is Brian Hopkins and I volunteered to FCN in 2021, after my wife died. I spent 30 years working with dairy farmers, with the MMB in Northern Devon up to 2000. When I was given the time to give back something to the farming community FCN was the obvious choice.

FCN works to serve farmers in need, as they live isolated lives and need someone to listen to their stories. This is done through the Helpline and volunteers aim to make direct contact very quickly. We then keep in touch and help with sorting out the problems and signposting them to the appropriate help.

Recently we have been looking at ways to improve our services in a way which leads to positive thinking and happiness. Throughout the country there are a number of breakfast clubs, coffee mornings or farm visits where farmers can come together to talk and to learn from one another. With that in mind I have been getting two groups together; one in Barnstaple on 15th January, at 10.30am in the St Johns Garden Centre cafe, and one in Woolsery in February. Experience tells us that after an introductory meeting groups wish to meet again, in what ever way is right for them, and the number of participants grows.

There are many wellbeing and other rural community groups queuing up to meet with them. Wellbeing means happiness, summed by these words from Spike Milligan

Smiling is infectious
You catch it like the flu
When someone smiled at me today,
I started smiling too.

So, if you feel a smile begin
don't leave it undetected
Let's start an epidemic
and get the world infected.

Brian Hopkins