

We all appear to live in a seemingly very fast moving and ever changing world. No sooner do we start to look back on a shared Covid experience than our life has yet again been rocked by world events with the issues and fallout from the war in the Ukraine and how this is affecting our current way of life.

We are all now facing into an ever increasingly unstable economy and with a Government who at times seem distanced from the importance of maintaining a viable rural infrastructure. Ever more is the need to appreciate what the countryside can offer to society. Covid clearly demonstrated the value of the environment and the importance of health & wellbeing and we as land managers are in this pivotal position to be able to deliver a real change.

The Marlborough Downs Nature Enhancement Partnership – the precursor to the national phenomena of Cluster Groups, has started something that has the ability to deliver a whole plethora of sustainable and realistic benefits and what an opportunity this is for us.

This year we have majored on delivering practical events and one of the highlights of the year was when Jill Carter opened up her nature reserve to Ukrainian families and their hosts to come and discover the delights of living on or near to the Marlborough Downs – thank you Jilly.

One is only as good as the people who work alongside us and yet again, and we all owe a huge thanks to Jemma and Janinka. There is a lot to look forward to, we have the ability to improve the quality of life of many people – and that is an enviable position to be, or as Shakespeare once said 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin'.

Finally, if you haven't already got one, and if you want to feel good about the environment that we live within then I would encourage you to get hold of one of David White's superb annual calendars – his ability to capture the wildlife that surrounds us – but that we do not always appreciate, is quite breath taking....what a lovely way to remember what is out there and surrounding us...we just need to take the time to appreciate it.

Wishing you all a very happy New Year.

Chris Musgrave

Chair, Marlborough Downs Space for Nature