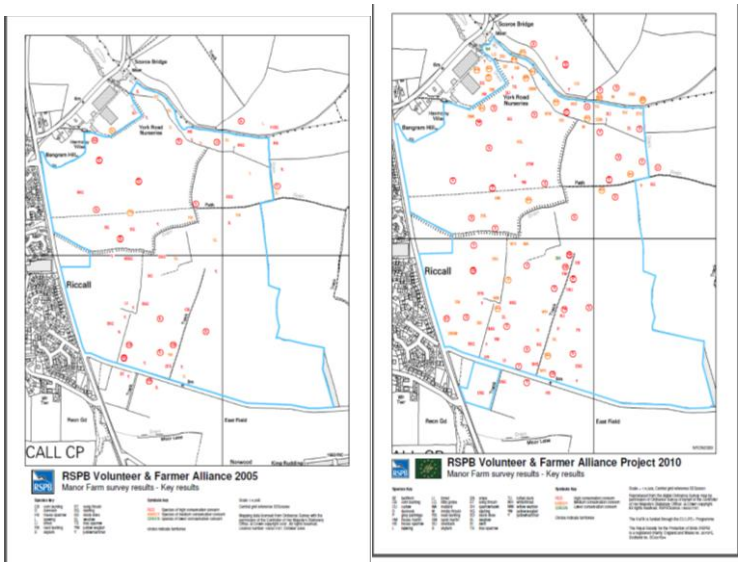
The Dovecote Barns at Manor Farm, Kelfield, York - 2025

The Dovecote Barns is a farm diversification offering environmentally focused accommodation, however, the family farm also has a job to do – producing food and supporting and improving the environment in which it works. The farm is in its 90th year now with the Bramley family and the 4th generation is now involved.

The farm is low lying, between 4 and 10 metres above sea level, with good quality soil, however, now with climate change, we are experiencing regular flooding. It is because of this that we diversified to create The Dovecote Barns, a sustainable, national award-winning green business.

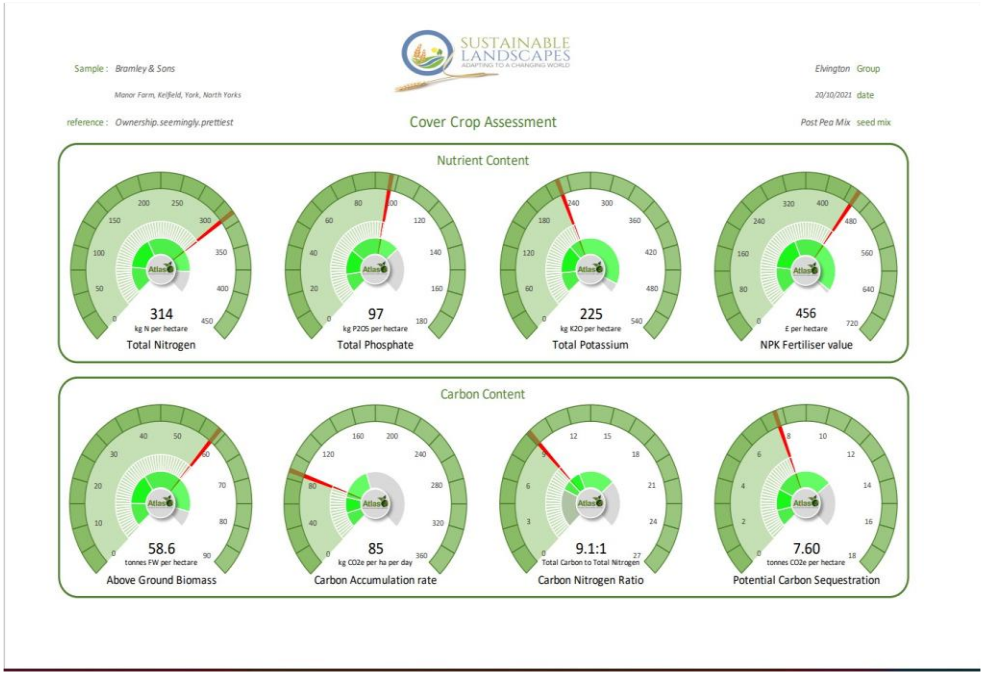
The farmed land in a typical year would produce enough produce from 200 hectares to yield:

- 900,000 loaves of bread
- 6 million+ pints of beer
- 100,000+ kilo bags of porridge oats
- 20,000 litres cooking oil
- 60,000 kg human consumption beans
- 285,000 bags Silver Spoon sugar
- 18 million bags of crisps
- Valuable co-products for animal feed c.1000t
- Calories to support over 12,000 people per annum
- Underpinning c.£25M at retail
- Biodiversity, ecosystem and landscape



In the last 25 years, the farm has really focused on improving soil health and providing habitat and support for the many plants, animals and insects which share our farm. This can be very challenging at times, but we are seeing rewards for our efforts. Regular bird surveys act as an indicator of the farm's health.

We have been growing cover crops now for nearly 20 years. These are great for soil health and soil microbes. They provide food and habitat for birds, mammals and insects. They also do a great job of protecting soil, locking carbon from the atmosphere and holding nutrients where we need them – in the soil, so protecting water quality.



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We've recorded nearly 90 species of birds over the years with sustained populations of popular species like corn bunting, yellow hammer and linnet. We have seen large flocks of golden plover, lapwings and black headed gulls interacting in autumn – according to local ornithologists this is something which hadn't been seen for over 20 years.

We especially like birds of prey – as they are thriving on the farm and at the top of the food chain, all is well. Bird of prey numbers have increased markedly on the farm in the last 20 years. While sparrow hawks, tawny owls, little owls (less often) and kestrels used to be the main highlights, we now additionally count barn owls, buzzard, kites (lots) and merlin (less often). A Peregrin Falcon was spotted at the land in Riccall. Recent image below Barn owls, Tawny Owls at the farmhouse.

Riccall Species	Conservation status	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Blackbird		1	10	4		6	14	4	
Blue tit		2	9	6	1	1	1	5	4
Buzzard		1			1				1
Carrion crow		4	14	4	4	8	6	14	
Chaffinch		9	1	4	18		23	1	30
Common Gull	Amber						4		
Corn bunting	Red			1	1				
Dunnock	Amber	4	4			1	2		2
Fieldfare	Red		40			36	110	130	48
Goldfinch		2			2	10	10	1	4
Great tit			4	3		2			2
Greenfinch	Red	2	2	1	20	2			
Green sandpiper	Amber						1		
Grey heron				1	2				
Greylag Goose	Amber							5	
Grey partridge	Red		2			2		5	4
Herring gull	Red					3	2		
Kestrel	Amber	1	1				1	1	
Little egret					1				
Linnet	Red					2	50	12	190
Long tailed tit			2					3	
Mallard	Amber		4						
Mistle Thrush									1
Meadow pipit	Amber				1	1	40		4
Moorhen								2	
Peregrine						1			
Pheasant		1	1	2	1	1	2	4	
Pied wagtail			1			2			1
Redwing	Red		40			20	40	5	1
Red legged partridge			17	1	3				10
Reed bunting	Amber	3			1		20		
Robin		1	4	2	2	1	2	4	
Siskin								28	
Skylark	Red	1		8	5	5		11	14
Snipe	Amber						2		
Song Thrush	Red						1	2	
Starling	Red		200			60	90	6	
Stock dove	Amber	3		4	12	12	4	6	6
Teal	Amber							6	
Woodpigeon	Amber	48	4	28	NC	NC		18	8
Wren	Amber	1	8	4	1	1	1	5	2
Yellowhammer	Red	8	2		8	20	45	3	30

We will be undertaking our 9th winter survey as part of the **Big Farmland Bird Count** in 2025. This survey above shows just the **Riccall half** of the farm on a single day survey.