

CARBON NEUTRAL DIPTON

NEWSLETTER
AUGUST 2023

We made it! The Carbon Neutral Project started in November 2022, culminating in a field day on 18 July to share the project findings and the learnings from the five case study farms and their modeled outcomes.

You can read the details of the findings in farm reports or in this overview book

[CLICK HERE](#)

We have also produced a video that summarises what the project was about

[CLICK HERE](#)

Fantastic turnout at Carbon Neutral Dipton Project Outcomes Field Day

There might not be a silver bullet to reduce Greenhouse Gases (GHG) on farm, but there's plenty of silver buck-shot that can contribute to significant improvements.

That was one of the themes that shone through at the Carbon Neutral Dipton Project Outcomes Field Day on 18 July.

Carbon Neutral Dipton is an aspirational, farmer-driven project aiming to balance environmental and economic sustainability through innovative on-farm change. The project started in November 2022.

More than 50 people attended event at the Dipton Hall with presentations, farm visits and Q&A session making for a thought-provoking and informative afternoon.



Lynden Prebble speaking at the project outcomes field day.

Farm consultant Chris Beatson from AgriMagic and forestry consultant Don Frengley presented their findings from working with five Dipton case study farmers — Clare and John Officer; Chris and Charleen Withy (both dairy); Chris and Serra and Jake and Joney Stewart; Brian and Kristine Russell; and Tony and Rayleen Dunnage (all sheep and beef).

Project manager Alexis Wadworth said it was a fantastic opportunity to meet the farmers, buddy farmers and consultants involved, visit two of the farms, and share experiences and outcomes.

“It’s great to be collectively thinking a bit outside the box about how we can aspire to be carbon neutral.”

Greater Dipton Catchment Group Chair Lynden Prebble said the project had been really positive and practical.

“We’re front-footing it from the ground up. We’re involving everybody and sharing ideas as we go on this journey.”

The consultants worked with the farmers and buddy groups to assess baseline emissions and then modelled and evaluated different ideas, with 4-5 scenarios considered for each farm.



Tony Dunnage speaking during the case study farmers’ Q&A panel.



Don Frengley speaking alongside Jake and Chris Stewart, overlooking the Stewarts property during the field day.

Scenarios included retiring or intensifying smaller areas of properties, changing livestock numbers or policies, planting crops such as oats, barley or maize, alternative wintering systems, or planting trees, among other ideas.

A common thread was that small adjustments across operations can add up to significant wins within existing farm systems, even when people are doing pretty much everything right – as is the case with all the farms involved.

Another strong theme was rethinking the management of steeper areas, such as weedy gullies, with opportunities such as tree planting.

Brian Russell said making less productive land work for them to “pay its way” was important.

Planting out these areas also saved money that would otherwise be spent on trying to maintain it as pasture.

“DON'T BE SCARED, TRY AND GO OUT AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

- Jake Stewart

Frengley said there was a lot of opportunity and risk with forestry, and that over time returns averaged out at about 10%.

Chris Withy said being part of the project highlighted that there was no one thing that would greatly reduce their on-farm GHGs without drastically altering their bottom line. An oat crop scenario just did not stack up for them, he said.

Technological advancements would continue to assist with efforts to reduce carbon footprint, he added.

The farmers talked about being as flexible and agile as possible, and not putting all your eggs in one basket.



Don Frengley speaking during a farm visit; Overlooking an area of the Stewarts farm where planting forestry was considered as part of the project



At the Dipton Hall hearing from Chris Beatson.

Everyone agreed that running the ruler over their existing operations, and thinking about different scenarios, was invaluable as they looked to fine tune their farms.

Jake Stewart talked about being open and honest about farming operations, and how it helped bring new ideas to the table. *“Don’t be scared, try and go out and make a difference.”*

Chris Stewart said they were quite proud of the food they produce. *“We’re feeding the world.”*

Dipton farmer Peter McDonald closed out the event by saying that while there was no silver bullet, there was some “silver buck-shot” that would greatly assist with continuous improvement on farms.

The project had attracted public, industry and corporate interest as the wider Dipton community was seen to be approaching GHG challenges in a positive and optimistic manner, he said.

The project is funded by Thriving Southland and the Ministry for Primary Industries.

“BEING ABLE TO MODEL THE SCENARIO'S FROM BOTH AN EMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE HAS BEEN REALLY VALUABLE AND WILL EMPOWER US TO MAKE SMART DECISIONS GOING FORWARD”

- John and Clare Officer

Thank you to our consultants

CHRIS BEATSON

Farm Environment Consultant, AgriMagic

Working in Canterbury and Southland, Chris enjoys being part of the agricultural sector, playing sport and spending time with his family. His passion for agriculture saw him attend Lincoln University where he completed a B.Ag Sci (Hons) degree and found particular interest in farm systems and maximising efficiencies within a farm system. Following university, Chris joined Agri Magic Ltd who work as farm system consultants to partner with clients linking environmental management to their business strategy. Chris is enjoying working with the Dipton Catchment Group as part of the Carbon Neutral Dipton project to quantify the environmental and financial implications of potential farm system changes.



DON FRENGLEY

Forestry Consultant

Don brings a wealth of forestry and farming knowledge to the Carbon Neutral Dipton Project. Don's experience in forestry spans 30 years, including roles with Rayonier, Craigpine and Wenita Forest Products. Most recently he has managed forest estates in Southland for Craigpine and Wenita.

Alongside his forestry experience, Don has experience in the ag industry, qualifying with a Bachelor of Agri Science from Lincoln, and in more recent times leasing a 200ha sheep & beef farm for 10 years. Don's business experience further adds to his input to this project, as a qualified accountant and owner of a climbing business, as well as an online design and print store alongside his wife.

In his spare time, Don can be found doing a variety of active outdoors activities including rock climbing, hunting, Mountain climbing or fishing.

"The project gave us a tool to benchmark our current operating system against other potential systems within our property and we learnt that we are basically on the right track. For us, the project highlighted the benefit of identifying lower production areas and planting in trees and utilizing the shelter to enhance stock performance."



LAND AND WATER SCIENCE

Thanks to the work of Land and Water Science, we have the opportunity to share a detailed video prepared by Dr Clint Rissmann. The video reviews the landscape DNA and discusses soil GHG profiles of the Greater Dipton Catchment. The full video can be viewed [here](#).

The farm scenarios that were modelled

Case Study Farms Final Mitigations modelled



#1	Russell	#2	Stewart	#3	Dunnage
Sheep and Beef farmers, 844ha		Sheep and Beef farmers, 625ha		Sheep and Beef farmers, 420ha	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Additional 72ha forestry2. Lambs sold store prior to Christmas3. Arable scenario, Maize4. All grass wintering5. Additional forestry on >10deg slope		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Plant 24.6ha of trees2. All grass wintering3. Trading cattle, no sheep enterprise4. All lambs finished by May5. Plant 86.4ha of trees		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Plant 14ha forestry2. 1/3 stock units as cattle3. Full trading enterprise4. Arable scenario, Barley & Oats5. Lamb trading, reduce breeding ewes & replacements	
#4	Officer	#5	Withy		
Dairy farmers, 151ha platform & 186ha runoff.		Dairy Farmers, 155ha, 143ha platform			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reduced milking cows, increased beef2. Lower replacement rate retained3. Beef animals finished earlier4. Plant 9 ha of pines planted on support block		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Herd home installed2. Lower stocking rate, lower input3. Lower replacement rate retained4. Oat milk, 20% of platform used to grow oats for milk			

Next steps

We are excited about what might come next and the group are already meeting to look at our options to maintain the momentum and engagement. We'd love to hear from you with any ideas you might have or your thoughts on this project. Email us at diptoncg@gmail.com

WATCH THIS SPACE AS DIPTON MOVED TOWARDS BECOMING CARBON NEUTRAL!

READ MORE AT: www.facebook.com/CarbonNeutralDiptonNZ

