



# Annual Report 2018-19

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## 1. Chair's Report

It must be said that 2019 was a very strange year. Both politically and from a farming aspect. For much of the year politics appeared in a permanent state of paralysis as debate about "Brexit" raged. Farming life reflected on it's own meteorologically-induced woes. Following one of the driest years in decades, the year started similarly with many areas of the UK fast approaching "drought" status, but that all changed and the deluge began. The wet late summer and autumn of 2019 made for a truly, tricky harvest and even trickier sowing conditions. Reports communicated by some of our new VI Champions, indicated that in some counties, for example Leicestershire and Warwickshire, only 20% of winter cereals were drilled. As I write this in December, although most arable land has now endured a short spell of dry weather and soils have begun to dry out, most are still too soggy to consider getting the drill out of the shed. It will certainly be an interesting spring drilling season, with the big question being, "what to drill" in the spring, since the spring barley market will be suppressed to say the most.

VI work with Government continues apace with Defra personnel from both the Environmental Quality and Plant Science Directorates receiving and accepting invitations to visit with myself and colleagues on farm to the east of York on a number of occasions throughout the year. The visits have been very useful to help instil a sense of a "seasonal view" of the complexity of life on a mid-sized arable and suckler herd farm and how a move to a no tillage rotation with high level stewardship pays big dividends with regard soil health and structure and on-farm biodiversity.

Work with Defra has been timely since, heading into 2020, the VI is very much involved in the consultation of the revised National Action Plan (NAP). This, in tandem with the much awaited Agriculture Bill and the Environment Bill to underpin the 25 year Environment Plan, will be important in shaping agricultural policy and practice as the UK prepares to exit the EU.

However, the VI is not standing still and faced several challenges during 2019. The decision of the RSPB and PAN (Pesticide Action Network) to resign from both the VI and the Pesticide Forum was an unwelcome, if somewhat, unexpected decision. Following some internal discussion with a number of the partners of the VI, the strategy Group decided that a longer term analysis and assessment of long- term policy and strategy was required and a scoping document is in preparation for review by Defra and the Ministerial team to decide the future direction of the VI, particularly with a move to focus on implementation of IPM.

Work with the water industry continues apace and is perhaps the key area where the VI can make a real difference in terms of the expectation of stakeholders and the public. Data from the EA and WaterUK suggest that when done in a structured manner, stewardship can have a dramatic effect on the amount of pesticide found in water courses. A concerted effort to help water companies to deal with on-farm pollution issues is only the first step to the VI making a huge difference to the sustainability of UK farming.

The VI recognises that there is a need for change and that the main focus should be on becoming a champion for IPM. As such, as detailed later in this report, our new initiative, the “VI Champions” aim to put the VI at the forefront of driving force to help change the mind-set of farmers and their advisers. Part of the problem with IPM is that many are doing some IPM that may not be recognised, but that it only requires often some small subsequent changes in practice to do more. With help and encouragement from industry leading peers, the VI is confident that we can drive through change across the Agricultural sector. The challenge is to do that in a meaningful way perhaps aided by a “carrot” approach afforded by the inclusion of an IPM-based approach to sustainable farming supported through the proposed Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme that will be developed over the coming months.



**Paul Temple**  
**VI Chairman**

## **2. The VI and its Stakeholders**

The VI is an industry-led partnership that works with government, regulators and stakeholders to promote the responsible use of agricultural and horticultural pesticides.

The VI Steering Group oversees and coordinates the work of the VI and keeps Ministers informed:

Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA)  
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)  
Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)  
Association of Independent Crop Consultants (AICC)  
Assured Food Standards (AFS)  
BASIS (Registration) Limited  
British Crop Production Council (BCPC)  
Chemicals Regulation Division, HSE (CRD)  
City and Guilds (C&G)  
Country Land and Business Association (CLA)  
Crop Protection Association (CPA)  
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland (DAERA-NI)  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)  
Environment Agency (EA)  
Farmers Union of Wales (FUW)  
Food Standards Agency (FSA)  
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)  
Lantra  
Linking the Environment and Farming (LEAF)  
National Association of Agricultural Contractors (NAAC)  
National Farmers Union (NFU)  
Natural England (NE)  
NFU Scotland (NFUS)  
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)  
The Scottish Government (SG)  
Ulster Farmers Union (UFU)  
Water UK  
Welsh Government (WG)

The strategic aims of the VI are as follows:

- Ensure that industry demonstrates continued commitment to best practice in pesticide use through enhanced uptake of IPM
- Ensure the Voluntary Initiative (VI) is considered the vanguard on pesticide stewardship by government, industry and stakeholders
- Minimise the environmental impact of pesticide use and related farming practices on water and biodiversity
- Maximise the opportunities for the development of UK agriculture post-Brexit

The strategic priorities of the VI are:

- Show continued leadership in the principle of industry self-regulation that delivers world leading benefit to UK agriculture post-Brexit
- Encourage adoption of enhanced IPM principles and ensure the uptake of a holistic approach to crop protection through integration of quantifiable IPM measures within the proposed new Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) or equivalent and in line with the 25 year Environment Plan
- Improvement in water quality, ensuring implementation of IPM minimises the impact of pesticides through enhanced stewardship and collaboration between the Agriculture and Water Industries
- Introduce a network of Regional “VI Champion” farmers and advisers to drive through change in the industry
- Improved stewardship of pesticides, specifically insecticides, to reduce the risk to bees and other pollinators through appropriate use of IPM linking to government National Pollinator Strategy
- Ensure the VI is the key delivery mechanism for the National Action Plan (NAP) for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides as the plan is revised during 2019 and linking into wider pesticide policy development
- To simplify delivery of information through integration of messaging between initiatives and across relevant organisations.

Adherence to best practice in pesticide use results in:

- Helping achieve the aims of the 25 year Environment Plan, by helping growers deliver “public goods” and to help achieve the goals for improving the environment within a generation and leaving it in a better state than we found it

- Reducing risk to the aquatic environment and improved compliance with the Water Framework Directive
- Protection of biodiversity, specifically pollinators and other farm wildlife through greater engagement with key stakeholders
- Reassurance for the general public that pesticides are being used safely
- Increasing confidence of consumers and retailers about the safety of food produced in the UK
- Actively reduce the first stage of in-field and farm store food waste

### 3. Priorities

#### A. Water

Much of the VI work on water quality has been delivered through a partnership with Water UK and the various water companies. We receive the most up-to-date data on the monitoring programmes undertaken by the water companies and this information feeds in to our strategy for dealing with those pesticides that are appearing most regularly in these reports.



The VI Water Group visiting the Hall Water Treatment Plant near Newark, the only one of it's kind in the UK, a visit kindly hosted by Anglian Water.

#### 1. OSR Herbicides: Think Water? Campaign



The VI has been at the forefront in developing the latest 'Oilseed Rape (OSR) herbicides? Think water' campaign. Five key herbicides commonly used to manage blackgrass in crops of OSR continue to be detected in raw water. The campaign helps farmers to minimise the risk to watercourses. The VI campaign focuses on 3 target catchments: The River Kym, Mimmshall Brook and

Instead Brook although the work will be applicable to all water companies facing similar problems.

Following poor establishment and problems caused by Cabbage Stem Flea Beetle, less OSR grown was planted during the 2019/20 season and this provided The VI and our project partners with an opportunity. The VI ran an early season campaign to encourage farmers to think more carefully about where OSR was sown, to actively encourage them to sow OSR in fields with the least risk of run-off to water courses, particularly with regard to fields with drains. The campaign used the hashtag #KeepItInTheField to highlight that any herbicide leaching into surface water is not only harmful, but also was not giving effective blackgrass/weed control and was costing farmers money! The Twitter and Facebook response was been very good, with articles also published in Farmers Guide, Arable Farmer and The Agronomist. During June, July and August, @TheVI\_Tweets generated 44 thousand impressions, highlighting the power and immediacy of Social Media.

Sep 2019 - 30 days

TWEET HIGHLIGHTS

**Top Tweet** earned 1,633 impressions

VI Director Jim Orson is back! Orson's Oracle is out, considering water run off and soil erosion, very apt with respect to our OSR Herbicides: Think Water! campaign where we encourage #BestPractice to help farmers #KeepItInTheField  
[@AnglianWater](#) [@AffinityWater](#)  
[@NorthumbrianH2O](#)  
[twitter.com/niabgroup/stat...](https://twitter.com/niabgroup/stat...)

Below are the five key messages from the campaign that farmers were asked to consider to minimise the movement of herbicides to water:

- **FIELD SELECTION:** Although dictated by rotation to a degree, aim to grow oilseed rape on a field that is low risk i.e. doesn't slope to a watercourse, less susceptible to run-off or further away from a water course. Fields that are high risk include those that have underdrainage or slope down to a watercourse. High risk fields might also include those that have problem levels of black-grass or other grass-weeds where metazachlor, propyzamide, and carbetamide may be used.
- **CULTIVATION AND TRAMLINES:** Cultivation is a key factor in managing risk. Considering appropriate establishment and direction of working travel are important factors in minimising risk according to soil type and topography. Lay out tramlines in order that they do not provide a direct route for water to leave the field e.g. enter the crop at the top of the field. If at all possible disturb the surface compaction in the tramlines. Those with GPS guidance on sprayers may like to switch off tramlining kits when drilling OSR.

- **BUFFERS:** Buffer zones next to watercourses can be effective in reducing run-off and soil particles that may contain pesticides reaching watercourses. A wider buffer zone is more effective. Cross compliance dictates a 2m minimal buffer zone, but the VI recommends establishment of a 6m buffer alongside watercourses if possible. Wider buffers are advisable in particularly vulnerable areas.
- **CHECK DESIGNATIONS:** Use the Environment Agency's Drinking Water Safeguard Zones Website ([http://bit.ly/EA\\_WIYBY](http://bit.ly/EA_WIYBY)) to check whether planned oilseed rape fields are in a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone. Avoid growing rape, if it requires herbicides likely to move to water, in these areas if at all possible, particularly if they are high risk fields.
- **INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT:** It is important to only use pesticides when necessary and there are a number of ways to reduce reliance on pesticides including cultivations, drilling dates, regular crop inspections among others. Talk to your BASIS-registered agronomist to make sure that where possible you utilise herbicides less likely to move to water where there is a risk of this occurring. As always: use the right product for the job, at the right time and to best practice.

However, the main focus of the 2019/20 campaign is to help growers effectively control the weed pest, in most cases blackgrass. Helping growers maximise control by applying the right product, at the right time, as part of an IPM-based approach is key! It is vital that stewardship steps are followed this season to help protect water and, as a result, the five actives themselves. To do this, we will use our new VI Champions (see below), to work in tandem with water company Catchment Officers and Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers' to drive the message home through peer-to-peer visits in catchment.

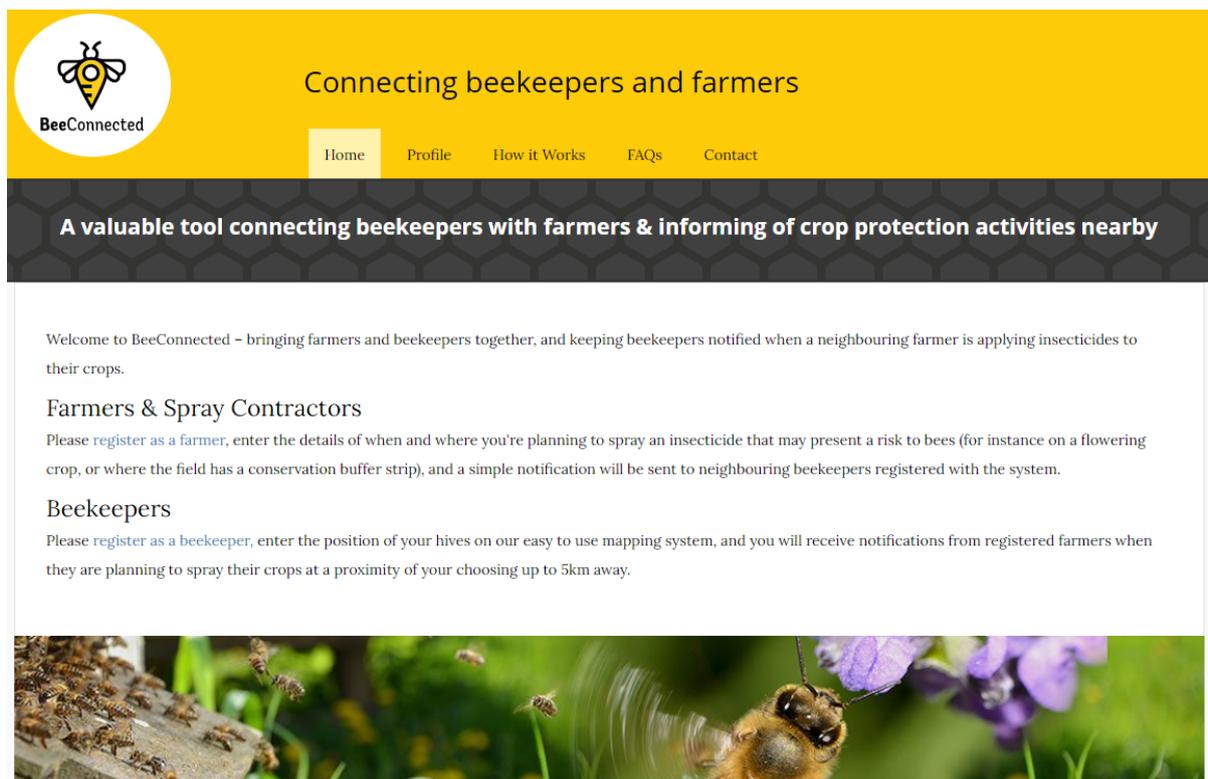
## B. Biodiversity

One of the priorities of the VI is to minimise the risk to bees and other pollinators. In 2018, the CPA-funded spray alert system BeeConnected was launched. This web-based alert system enables operators to alert directly local beekeepers of their planned insecticide applications.



**BeeConnected**

However, uptake of the system by both farmers, growers, sprayer operators and beekeepers has been lower than expected. The VI is working with the farming union's, Red Tractor and the other farm assurance schemes to increase awareness of the scheme as evidence of the 'Code of Practice for using Plant Protection Products' requirement to inform local beekeepers before using certain sprays in place of the previous telephone-based sprayer liaison network operated by the British Beekeepers Association. Featured at agricultural shows such as Cereals 2019 and Croptec 2019, and with presentations at the BBKA 2019 spring conference and featured on the social media of the VI and supporting organisations, figures are slowly increasing year on year.



**BeeConnected**

Connecting beekeepers and farmers

Home Profile How it Works FAQs Contact

**A valuable tool connecting beekeepers with farmers & informing of crop protection activities nearby**

Welcome to BeeConnected - bringing farmers and beekeepers together, and keeping beekeepers notified when a neighbouring farmer is applying insecticides to their crops.

### Farmers & Spray Contractors

Please [register as a farmer](#), enter the details of when and where you're planning to spray an insecticide that may present a risk to bees (for instance on a flowering crop, or where the field has a conservation buffer strip), and a simple notification will be sent to neighbouring beekeepers registered with the system.

### Beekeepers

Please [register as a beekeeper](#), enter the position of your hives on our easy to use mapping system, and you will receive notifications from registered farmers when they are planning to spray their crops at a proximity of your choosing up to 5km away.



## C. Meeting the Sustainable Use Directive

Although the United Kingdom will formally leave the European Union next year, the EU Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUD) has been transposed into UK legislation and the Government has stated its intention to retain the general provisions of the SUD for the immediate future. The VI and its schemes provide delivery mechanisms which help meet many aims of the SUD and the UK's National Action Plan (NAP) for the sustainable use of pesticides. The NAP will be reviewed by government during 2020. Currently, there are three main elements which affect farmers and sprayer operators:

- To encourage greater use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) – economically and environmentally sustainable management of pests, weeds and diseases using cultural, chemical, physical and biological controls. The VI IPM Plan has been adopted by the UK farm assurance schemes, ensuring IPM is used on farm. The VI in Scotland has developed a specific IPM Plan to address their particular weed, disease and pest issues. The challenge is now to continue to develop and enhance the Plan so that it remains relevant to all those responsible for using the plan, from farmers/growers to advisers/agronomists. The VI is working to introduce an updated IPM Plan that also provides a metric on IPM uptake in 2020. As part of ongoing work over the next few years, the VI are looking to work with the Government to further embed the use of the IPM within British agriculture.
- For all spray operators to hold a specified certificate. The VI continues to raise awareness of the need for operators to hold a specified certificate. In this way, by ensuring operators are up-to-date not only with our current legislation but also the safe handling and stewardship of pesticides, we can continue to maintain the professionalism of the UK's sprayer operators as being amongst the best trained in the world.
- For equipment to be tested. Since November 2016, certain pesticide application equipment is required to hold a valid test certificate from the National Sprayer Testing Scheme. The majority of equipment in regular use is already tested voluntarily on an annual basis, as the UK farm assurance schemes have long championed this as best practice. The VI continues to promote the Scheme and demonstrate that the UK has amongst the best maintained spraying equipment in the world.

### 4. Key measures and indicators

**National Register of  
Sprayer Operators (NRoSO)**



NRoSO is a VI scheme managed by City & Guilds. It is a central register of sprayer operators using Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as a means of ensuring ongoing training to ensure best practice. Members must be fully qualified and collect a minimum number of CPD points each year. Membership of NRoSO is a necessary requirement of many of the UK's farm assurance schemes. As of March

31st 2019 there were 21,918 NRoSO members. As with NSTS figures reported below, membership reflects the agricultural nature of the different UK regions with 86% of members being located in England, 10% in Scotland, 3% in Wales and 1% in Northern Ireland.

## National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS)



Certain pesticide application equipment must hold a valid test certificate to comply with the national legislation implementing the SUD. The NSTS is a VI scheme managed by the Agricultural Engineers Association which encourages the annual testing of equipment to meet the requirements of many farm assurance schemes.

NSTS report a comparable number of tests to 2018 with 16,084 sprayers tested. As always, the vast majority of those were done in England (14,056) comprising the main arable area of the UK. There was a year on year decrease in agricultural sprayers tested, reflecting the cyclic nature of the testing regime, however, there was an increase in the number of sprayers tested in the Amenity sector. Just over half (52%) of sprayers tested had no faults when tested whilst those presented with 3 or more faults decreased slightly. There is obviously room for improvement on those sprayers presented with faults and guidance from NSTS is that continued and appropriate maintenance is the best way to prevent faults. NSTS expect the number of sprayers tested to remain fairly static but a cyclic effect is expected when legislation changes in November of 2020 to 3 yearly testing of sprayers over 3 metres, air blast, train and aircraft sprayers.

## Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP)



The VI's IPMP was developed in consultation with the NFU. In 2016, the Scottish VI group and NFU Scotland developed a specific IPM plan for Scotland. The number of Scottish IPM Plans completed is given below for the first time. LEAF also provides a plan as part of their member's annual audit and Conservation Grade farmers also fulfil the objectives of integrated pest management. IPM plans help ensure economically and environmentally sustainable management of pests, weeds and diseases using a range of cultural, chemical, physical and biological controls. The plans are used by 16,820 farmers across approximately 4.4 million hectares. Of these figures the LEAF Sustainable Farming review accounts for 422,290ha and Conservation Grade accounts for approximately 20,000ha. The VI are working on an improved version of the IPM Plan which it is hoped will be launched in 2020.

Indicator	March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2017	March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2018	March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2019
<b>NRoSO members</b>	21,818	22,132	21,918
<b>NSTS tests<sup>(1) (2)</sup></b>	20,344	16,688 <sup>(3)</sup>	16,084
<b>IPM Plans</b>	5,720	5,917	7,386
<b>Scottish IPM Plans<sup>(2)</sup></b>	176	383	1429

<sup>(1)</sup> Total number of tests for all types of pesticide application equipment (including: Liquid; Granular; Fogging; and Slug Pellet)

<sup>(2)</sup> Data based on calendar year (i.e. January to December)

<sup>(3)</sup> Figure is an estimate to the end of the year

## **5. The VI around the UK**

Through its national groups the VI provides a UK wide framework for promoting best practice at the local level.

### **Scotland**

With several changes to the secretariat of the VI in Scotland the coordination of interested partners has been challenging. The appointment of Jenny Brunton (NFUS) in the Secretariat role is very welcome and Jenny's enthusiasm allied to a good practical background will see added engagement from interested parties. The Scottish VI is committed and welcomed the VI Champions initiative in Scotland with the appointment of John Murie. There are more Scottish Champions in the pipeline and I will report more fully on this next year.

The completion of an IPM plan is now a pre-requisite of the SQC (Scottish Quality Crops) assurance scheme but the VI in Scotland has been pushing very hard for IPM details to be integral with advice from our Agronomists and be detailed at the outset of decision making and be part of a decision tree when crops are inspected. This written documentation should take over from an IPM or IFM (Integrated Farm Management) plan in the future but it will need cooperation from all and the involvement of digital platforms like Gatekeeper and Muddy boots.

Engagement with Scottish Government is ongoing and invitations to our Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment Mairi Gougeon have been issued and accepted. With environment and food now higher up the Political agenda it is more important than ever to have a strong and broad-based view from interested parties to give a balanced view and steer to Government on the way ahead.

We welcomed Neal Evans (VI Operations Director) to our meeting in October where he gave an update including the background to the resignations of RSPB and PAN from the VI and the proposed new strategy for the VI going forward. At the same meeting, Scottish Water gave very positive responses to use of ferric phosphate in the North East in replacing methaldehyde.

We have a very strong commitment from SASA outlined below:

#### **Future Direction of Scottish VI**

- SASA would like to see the promotion of reduction in the use of unnecessary pesticides. It was noted that chemical control is vital but that bad practice needs to be addressed.
- It was raised that some felt there was a lack of evidence and facts regarding use of pesticides and it was agreed that SASA would circulate data on pesticide usage – area, amounts etc.
- Potential to rebrand in order to engage with NGOs whilst maintaining place on national VI.

- It was agreed that NFUS would facilitate a meeting with the Scottish Government to gauge their opinion on the role of the VI.
- The Scottish VI has to ‘benefit the environment whilst keeping farming profitable and healthy.’

### **Andrew Moir, VI Chairman, Scotland**

#### **Northern Ireland**

Since taking over the role of VI Chair in October 2019 I have found the role extremely interesting and rewarding. I was approached by Patricia Erwin from Ulster Farmers Union and after further encouragement from David Brown, Deputy President UFU and a few others I decided to get involved.

From a Northern Ireland context, the role of the Voluntary Initiative was very low-profile with links to Farmers and Sprayer Operators being the only identity the Initiative had locally, with sprayer testing and NRoSO being the main connections.

I therefore believe one of my main objectives is to improve and extend the relationship the VI has with Statutory Bodies, NGOs and the trade within Northern Ireland so that the message of Good Stewardship and Best Practice through the adoption of an Integrated Pest Management-based approach is promoted throughout the Agri-Industry locally.

The Water Catchment Partnership (WCP) – of which the Voluntary Initiative is a stakeholder, continues to meet to discuss local water quality issues. I have found this of great personal benefit as it has made me much more aware of local water quality issues. We recently produced a joint statement on Plant Protection Products (PPPs) use in response to some rather antagonistic reporting on the use of Glyphosate in local press. I believe this joined-up approach and response gives more clarity to the general public about the use and application of PPPs. The other main stakeholders in WCP are DAERA, NI Water, NI Environment Agency and UFU.

The highly successful ongoing programme of weed-wiping using Glyphosate in water catchment areas rather than field spraying with MCPA has continued throughout 2019. Results from the water treatment stations continue to show significantly reduced levels of phenoxy herbicides in the samples carried out by NI Water. The ‘Rush Solution without Pollution’ programme was actively promoted at several provincial shows in conjunction with the ‘Source to Tap’ project.

May I take this opportunity to thank Neal Evans and all sponsors of the VI for the very warm welcome I have received at VI Strategy and Steering Group Meetings. It’s a privilege and pleasure to represent Northern Ireland at such a high level within our industry. I would also like to thank Sarah Mukherjee of the Crop Protection Association for the excellent VI Champions Media training session in November. As the VI Champion for NI, I found the whole day very worthwhile and extremely informative.

Finally my thanks to Patricia Erwin for putting her confidence in me to help take forward the work of VI in N Ireland.

### **Bruce Steele, VI Chairman, Northern Ireland**

## **Wales**

The VI works closely with the Welsh Pesticides Partners group that is made up from a wide range of stakeholder organisations.

In 2018/19 the group were involved in promoting Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water's "PestSmart" campaign which featured a number of initiatives. In addition to free advice this initiative built on weed wiper trials that began in 2015 to offer free weed wiper hire. Weed wipers were available to hire for farmers in three sensitive catchments on the Rivers Teifi, Wye and Towy. The successful trial concluded in 2019 having facilitated over 280 hires and avoided over 5,500 litres of MCPA being used in the sensitive catchment areas. The trial had a positive impact on water quality, and awareness of best practice by the farmers and land managers was also increased.

The PestSmart initiative also funded a free and confidential pesticide disposal programme aimed to remove unwanted, re-voked or out-of-date pesticides which was targeted at farmers, growers, foresters and land managers.

The group continues to meet regularly and the VI attends those meeting whenever possible. The Chair of the group – Bob Merriman – is keen to build closer links with the VI and other stakeholders to ensure that Welsh farmers, growers, agronomists and sprayer operators continue to benefit from this close co-operation. For example, during 2019 it was agreed that The Welsh Pesticide Partners Group should have representation on the NRoSO Advisory Board and a member will attend the 2020 Board meeting.

## 6. The VI Champions

In autumn 2019, the VI introduced a new initiative, the VI Champions. Taking the message further than “best practice” and “safe stewardship” of pesticide use, the VI is moving to a message of integrated pest and crop management to drive change across the industry, working towards the visions encapsulated in the 25 year Environment Plan. We recruited a team of experienced and passionate growers and advisers to provide knowledge and peer-to-peer learning, driving home the VI’s emphasis on IPM.

The VI message of an IPM-based approach to sustainable farming requires close interaction with on-farm decision makers. Champions will deliver VI IPM-focused presentations and messages, to lead active dialogue to challenge current practice and drive through a commitment to farming in an environmentally sustainable way.



The 19 VI Champions recruited to date (see map), farmers/advisors/catchment officers are held in high esteem within the agriculture and water industries for advocating forward-thinking farming practices with an excellent knowledge of the problems affecting the UK farming and water industries. Each has a good understanding of VI core values with regard safe and responsible use of pesticides and they will all have received media training. All are advocates

of the need to move to environmentally sustainable farming through the adoption of an IPM-based approach.



See Bruce Steele (Northern Ireland) and some of our VI Champions on Youtube to see why IPM means so much to them, click on the image to view.

## 7. Working with other initiatives

The VI is committed to working with, bringing together and championing other initiatives in this area.



### Nematicide Stewardship Programme

The Nematicide Stewardship Programme promotes best practice, helping to ensure the responsible use of nematicides; a vital tool in tackling potato cyst nematodes - the biggest pest threat to the potato industry. The VI supports this group and its objectives. [www.nspstewardship.co.uk](http://www.nspstewardship.co.uk)

### Metaldehyde Stewardship Group (MSG)

Metaldehyde in raw water is a particular problem in catchments used as drinking water sources. The aim of the group is to promote and encourage best practice use of metaldehyde slug pellets, to minimise environmental impacts and in particular protect water. As we work towards the final deadline for disposal, storage and use of existing stock on the 31 Dec 2021, the VI continues to work closely with the MSG to address these issues. [www.getpelletwise.co.uk](http://www.getpelletwise.co.uk)



### Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use

The VI has strengthened links with the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use which promotes best practice and training for the use of rodenticides among all professional users including farmers. [www.thinkwildlife.org](http://www.thinkwildlife.org)

### Catchment Sensitive Farming

Although the VI Strategic Partnership with Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) formally ended last year, both parties continue to work together wherever possible to help disseminate information for each other. It is hoped recent developments, that will see funding for CSF activities continue for the next few years, will result in more partnership working.



### Championing the Farmed Environment

As well as working in partnership on issues affecting pollinators and wider farm biodiversity, the VI has provided the CFE with VI Champion speakers to aid local CFE delivery. Together the VI and CFE launched a best practice document for arable and grassland farmers. [www.cfeonline.org.uk](http://www.cfeonline.org.uk). CFE recently undertook a review of their work and relaunched during 2019 and the VI hopes that there will continue to be a close co-operation between the two organisations.

### Tried & Tested

This initiative addresses the issues associated with nutrient management – particularly the use of manures and slurries; one of its aims is to help keep nitrates out of watercourses. As water protection is a key theme for both initiatives the VI and T&T work together where possible.

[www.nutrientmanagement.org](http://www.nutrientmanagement.org)



### Amenity Forum

The Amenity Forum promotes and encourages proper and responsible use of both pesticides and integrated methods to amenity users of professional plant protection products. The VI and Amenity Forum work together on common aims and objectives. [www.amenityforum.co.uk](http://www.amenityforum.co.uk)

## 8. The VI CIC

The Voluntary Initiative registered with Companies House as a Community Interest Company (The VI-CIC) in 2009. The VI-CIC has 10 directors, including the eight organisations that sponsor the VI:





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