

VERONICA WHITE

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I am an interdisciplinary environmental social scientist and professional communicator, specialising in community-focused and impact-driven approaches to research and knowledge exchange. My PhD examines competing visions of England's farming futures and the contestation of sustainability transitions within agriculture. I have worked in inter- and transdisciplinary research teams and have developed relationships with diverse stakeholders across academia, policy, community, and industry. I also have professional experience translating social science research into accessible outputs, including reports, infographics, videos, social media content, and web-based resources. I am looking to further my career as an interdisciplinary and impact-driven researcher in a project that will allow me to draw on my skills and interests in sustainability transitions, creative and participatory methods, and knowledge exchange, as I work to drive positive action towards sustainable futures.

EDUCATION

PhD Sustainable Futures: *University of Exeter* (2023–Present)

- PhD thesis provisionally titled “Visualising future farming: imaginaries of England’s farming futures” (submission December 2026)
- Supervisors: Professor Saffron O’Neill (Geography) and Dr Angela Cassidy (SPSPA)
- Funding: ESRC’s South West Doctoral Training Partnership (SWDTP)
- Affiliations: University of Exeter Geography, Centre for Rural Policy Research (CRPR), Centre for Climate Communication & Data Science (C3DS)

MRes Sustainable Futures (Distinction): *University of Exeter* (2022–23)

MSc Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture (Distinction): *University of Exeter* (2019–20)

BSc Environmental Sciences with a Year in Industry (First Class): *University of East Anglia* (2015–19)

IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT SKILLS

- **Dissemination of social science:** confident communicating social science knowledge to academic, public, or policy audiences, by translating specialist language into accessible and attractive outputs
- **Network development:** built and maintain a network of farmers, researchers, community groups, and industry organisations across England
- **Creative and visual communication:** utilise my skills as a professional photographer, videographer, and graphic designer to create academic and non-academic outputs for research dissemination (including reports, infographics, posters, social media content, and short films)
- **Written communication:** wrote summary reports, social media copy, and sustainability-focused blog posts and newsletters for stakeholder engagement, network building, and outreach
- **Verbal communication:** comfortable presenting in front of large audiences and sharing research findings with academics, community groups, and policymakers
- **Media engagement:** liaised with the University of Exeter’s Press Office, drafted press releases, confident being interviewed on camera, radio, and podcasts
- **Event planning:** planned and hosted events, meetings, and workshops, used Microsoft Office (Outlook, Teams, and SharePoint) to coordinate with internal and external colleagues
- **Social media:** create engaging social media content for Instagram and LinkedIn based on my project’s brand identity and voice

EXAMPLES OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION WORK

Report writing & design (e.g. report designed for the 'Agri-Environmental Governance Post-Brexit' project)



Engaging 'harder to reach' farmers: the roles and needs of skilled intermediaries

Research summary

Veronica White, Paul Huxley, Jilly Hall, Jessica Lyon, Judith Tasouvas, David Christian-Pope & Ruth Little



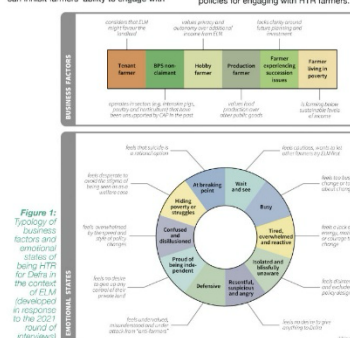
Research findings

Understanding the individuality of farmers

HTR farmers are a heterogeneous group, a finding which was validated by the 2021 round of interviews. This heterogeneity makes engaging with the sector challenging, as different strategies of interaction will work for some farmers, but not others.

In an attempt to improve farmers' engagement with policy development, previous research has segmented farmers into different farming identities. In a similar vein, this research aimed to identify the business factors and emotional states that can inhibit farmers' ability to engage with Defra in the context of ELM. The typology presented in previous work was refined based on feedback from participants during the 2021 round of interviews. The new typology (Figure 1) reinforces the diversity of reasons that farmers may be HTR for Defra, highlighting the need for different engagement strategies for different farmers.

It is important to note that these are not fixed categories – farmers can experience multiple emotional states and can fall into multiple business factors, all of which can change depending on the farmers' circumstances. An understanding of this typology can assist Defra in developing stakeholder engagement policies for engaging with HTR farmers.





This is a period of significant uncertainty for farmers

Even before the pandemic, the period between 2021 and 2028 represented significant uncertainty and change for farmers within England, due to policy changes and post-Brexit trade deals.

Respondents identified a range of impacts of the pandemic on farmers and engagement with farmers, including:

- Increased social isolation due to closure of places where farmers normally socialise (e.g. pubs, marts & shows)
- Increased use of online platforms for farmer engagement
- Uncertainty and difficulty planning ahead exacerbating farmers' mental health and wellbeing problems
- Increased public support for local farmers, with farmers being increasingly recognised as key workers

It is through the lens of this complex and challenging context that Defra should plan future co-design activities. More research is needed to identify the long-term impacts of the pandemic on farmers, including how it has impacted on their ability to input into the co-design of ELM.

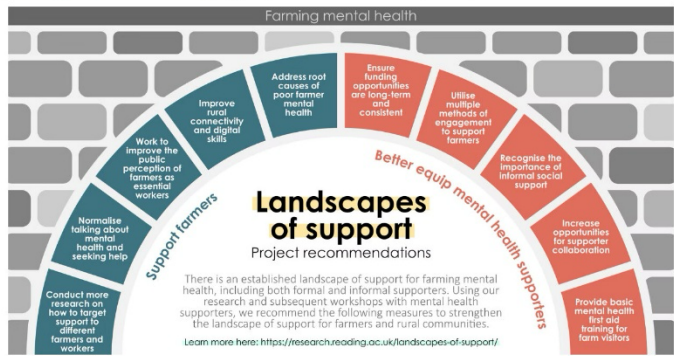
This research also shows that the pandemic has changed how different groups and organisations engage with farmers. Just as farming has continued throughout the pandemic, engagement with farmers has too.

Respondents outlined the ways they have engaged with farmers over the last twelve months:

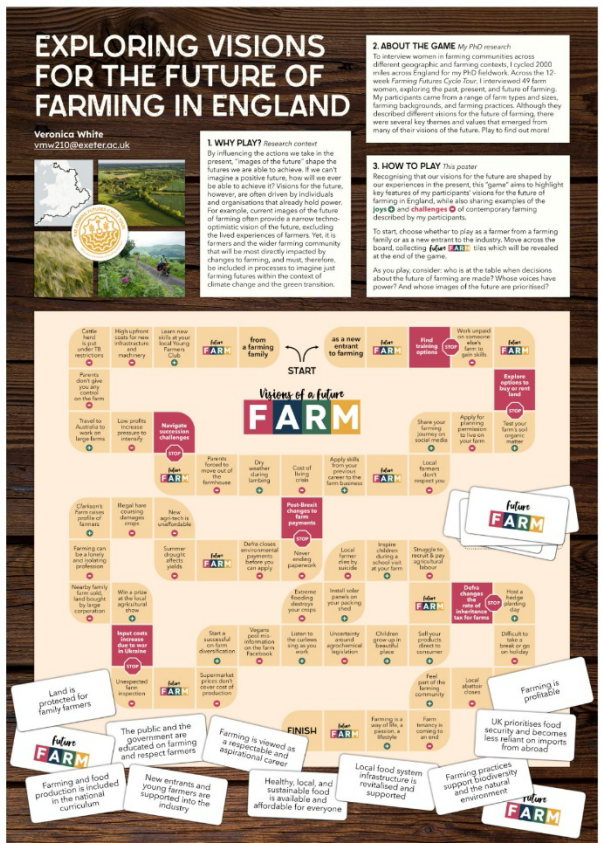
- Telephone calls to catch up and have friendly chats, undertake consultations or discuss stewardship schemes. Multiple respondents described calling farmers to help them build digital skills (e.g. by taking them through how to use Zoom)
- Socially distanced events, including face-to-face events held in barns or fields
- Virtual & digital events have become more prevalent over the last year. Some respondents described increased engagement from the parish to online events. But also highlighted that these were likely not reaching HTR farmers due to the lack of digital skills/confidence and infrastructure needed to participate. The so-called digital divide may have reinforced the exclusion of some HTR farmers and further widened the gap between engaged and disengaged farmers. Respondents stressed that digital and IT capacity building is going to be key to successfully engaging HTR farmers.

The stories and experiences described by respondents have highlighted the need for engagement with HTR farmers to be led by people that farmers already know and trust, especially in times of uncertainty.

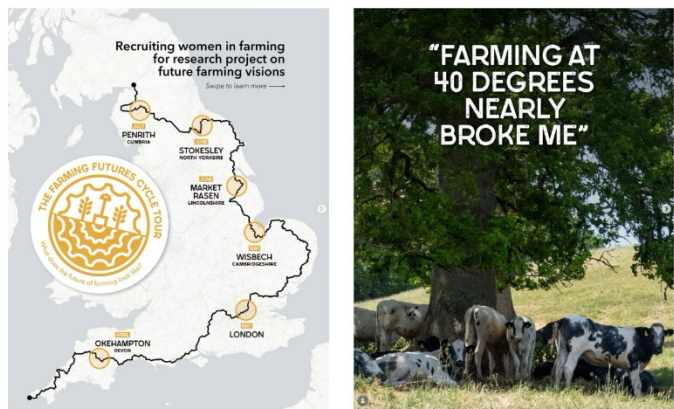
Infographic design (e.g. research outputs)



Poster design (e.g. award-winning PhD poster)



Social media content (e.g. PhD recruitment & findings)



Event photography (e.g. at conferences, community events, and workshops)



RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

PhD research project: *University of Exeter* (2023–Present)

- Designed and completed an independent, 12-week multi-sited ethnography – the [Farming Futures Cycle Tour](#) – while cycling 2,000 miles across England to explore visions for the future of farming.
- Combined participatory visioning interviews with 49 farming women, autoethnographic reflections, and participant observation in rural spaces.
- Thematically analysed interview transcripts and fieldnotes in NVivo to identify competing visions of farming futures, including key areas of agreement and conflict.
- Developed and maintain a strong network of farmers, researchers, and industry organisations to shape research methods, recruit participants, and communicate research findings.
- Shared my PhD story widely through social media and traditional media, helping with recruitment and increasing public awareness of my project, leading to several outreach opportunities.
- Filmed and edited a [short overview film of my fieldwork](#), which was selected as one of five films to be screened to 200+ attendees at the Royal Geographical Society’s Winter Film Night.
- Co-convened two sessions on ‘Contestations of green transitions in UK agriculture’ at the 2026 RGS Annual Conference.
- Taught in seminars for the ‘Environment, Literature, & Activism’ 3rd year module and supported Geography staff on the ‘Learning Through Place’ undergraduate field trip to Bristol.

MRes research project: *University of Exeter* (Jan–Aug 2023)

- Conducted eight photo elicitation interviews with university students and six expert interviews with staff to explore student food insecurity during the cost of living crisis.
- Designed a [research summary report](#) and presented the findings to university management to help inform university policies on student food insecurity.

Impact Communications consultant: Freelance (Oct 2021–Aug 2022)

- Worked with researchers to improve the impact and reach of their work by translating the findings of social science research projects into a range of creative and visual outputs, including infographics, reports, and social media content.
- Led communication workshops for researchers, including on how to use Affinity Publisher to design attractive reports.

Research Assistant for the “Agri-Environmental Governance Post-Brexit: Engaging Harder to Reach Farmers” project: *University of Sheffield* (Jan–July 2021)

- Worked collaboratively as part of a research team to identify how Defra can better engage with “harder to reach” (HTR) farmers in the co-design of agri-environmental policies.
- Conducted 10 expert interviews and analysed 48 interview transcripts to explore the role of skilled intermediaries in supporting policymakers to engage with HTR farmers on policy co-design.
- Wrote and designed the [Research Summary](#), translating social science findings into accessible recommendations for policy audiences.
- Presented the findings of the project to key policymakers within Defra, supporting discussions on the development of more inclusive environmental governance approaches.

Supply Chain Sustainability Industrial Placement: *GlaxoSmithKline* (GSK), London (2017–18)

- Produced and distributed a regular sustainability newsletter to engage GSK’s global supplier network, featuring blog posts and infographics that I had created.
- Planned and coordinated meetings and events with internal and external stakeholders.
- Led the annual GSK Supplier Sustainability Awards, including managing and judging entries. Redesigned the Awards’ communications strategy to include videos, infographics, and presentations, resulting in a 70% increase in submissions from the previous year.

OUTREACH AND DISSEMINATION

Policy and stakeholder engagement

- 2026 Spoke about my PhD findings at the Groundswell Regenerative Farming Festival on an Emergent Generation panel titled 'A celebration of young women working in farming and food'
- 2025 Discussed initial reflections from my PhD fieldwork to farmers and growers at the 'Landworking Women and Diverse Genders Skill-Share' hosted at a farm in East Devon
- 2024 Presented the findings of my MRes research on student food insecurity to the University of Exeter's Cornwall Student Experience Committee (CSEC), the Cost of Living Working Group, and the presidents of the Falmouth & Exeter Students' Union to inform university policies
- 2021 Presented the findings of our research on engaging 'harder to reach' (HTR) farmers to key policymakers at Defra, including making recommendations on the role of skilled intermediaries
- 2021 Co-presented research findings on HTR farmers to the Defra 'Co-design community meet-up'

Invited talks and film screenings

- 2026 Royal Geographical Society (RGS) *Winter Film Night* (film screening and panel)
- 2026 Youth Adventure Trust *Reel Adventures Film Night* (film screening and audience Q&A)
- 2025 [Postcards from the Field](#) opening event for the RGS Explore Weekend
- 2025 *Okehampton Green Drinks* hosted by the Plastic Free Okehampton community group
- 2025 World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) *UK Annual General Meeting 2025*

Workshops and events hosted

- 2026 *Collage your PhD workshop* as part of the University of Exeter PGR Festival of Research
- 2026 *Communicating qualitative data* online workshop for University of Keele PGR Cafe
- 2026 *Designing research posters* online workshop for NWSSDTP PhD students
- 2025 *Beyond Farm to Fork* symposium for Exeter PhD students studying food-related topics

Selected academic presentations

"Imagining and realising a just future for farming: visions from farm women across England"

- Sept 2026 Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, London
- June 2026 Food@Geo seminar, Utrecht University, NL
- June 2026 Institute for Environmental Studies seminar, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, NL
- June 2026 Feminist Futures for Food & Farming symposium, Wageningen University, NL

"The Farming Futures Cycle Tour: initial reflections and findings from a PhD by bike"

- Dec 2025 Environment, Transport, and Sustainability (EnTS) seminar, University of Bath
- Sept 2025 Food & Communication Conference, Lille, FR
- Aug 2025 Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, Birmingham

Videography

- 2025 [The Farming Futures Cycle Tour: aka my cycling-based fieldwork adventure](#)
- 2024 [Dissonance](#) (Commended Entry to the Climate Creatives [Heatwaves challenge](#))
- 2016 [Cleaning our Plastic Beaches](#) interview with Shelly Ericksen

Social media management

- Share my research journey on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to a combined 3,300+ followers
- Started the Food Geographies Research Group [LinkedIn page](#), grew it to 800+ followers in a year

Selected media engagement

- 2026 [Humans of Groundswell 2026](#) podcast interview
- 2025 [BBC Farming Today](#) radio interview
- 2025 [University of Exeter's Veronica White to finish cycle tour, South West Farmer](#)
- 2025 [Cycling researcher seeks views from female farmers, BBC](#)

RESEARCH SKILLS

- **Interviews:** 70+ semi-structured interviews (including interactive, expert, and photo-elicitation)
- **Participatory future visioning:** utilised an interactive method based on the Futures Triangle to co-produce place-based future visions with farming women across England during my PhD fieldwork
- **Creative and participatory approaches:** involved farming women in early research design and discussion of early findings, developed a novel cycling-based multi-sited ethnography to reach participants across a range of geographic and farming contexts, utilised art-based approaches (e.g. film and collage) for analysis and knowledge exchange
- **Qualitative analysis:** thematic analysis and content analysis of text, news articles, and imagery
- **Collaborative research:** worked in inter- and transdisciplinary research teams, including collaborating on data collection, analysis, and co-production of academic and policy outputs
- **Project delivery:** independently managed competing priorities for grant applications, ethical approval, risk assessments, fieldwork planning, participant recruitment, and data collection

PUBLICATIONS

O'Neill, S., **White, V.**, Cann, T.J.B., Simon, F.M., Johnstone-Hack, A., Puttock, S., Hayes, S., Blewett, O., Camargo, C., Coan, T., Gonzalez Espinosa, F., Malla, R., Qureshi, S. and Westwood, N., 2025. [How does GenAI 'see' climate change: Exploring the challenges and opportunities of GenAI for climate visual journalism.](#) *Digital Journalism*, 1-21.

Blewett, O., Hayes, S., Westwood, N., **White, V.** and O'Neill, S., 2025. [Beyond the 'iconic' climate visual: investigating absent representations of climate change.](#) In: Dahmen, N. and Thompson, T.J. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Visual Journalism*. London: Routledge.

White, V., 2024. [Surviving or thriving? Exploring university students' ability to access and afford food during the cost of living crisis.](#) Research Summary. University of Exeter.

Hurley, P., Lyon, J., Hall, J., Little, R., Tsouvalis, J., **White, V.** and Rose, D.C., 2022. [Co-designing the environmental land management scheme in England: The why, who and how of engaging 'harder to reach' stakeholders.](#) *People and Nature*, 4 (3), 744-757.

White, V., Hurley, P., Hall, J., Lyon, J., Tsouvalis, J., Rose, D.C. and Little, R., 2021. [Engaging 'harder to reach' farmers: the roles and needs of skilled intermediaries.](#) *Research Summary*. Universities of Sheffield & Reading.

SUCCESSFUL GRANT & FUNDING APPLICATIONS

2026	ESRC-SWDTP	Overseas Institutional Visit funding (£2,200)
2025	Royal Geographical Society	Postgraduate Research Awards (£750)
2025	University of Exeter	Researcher-led Initiative award (£1,000)
2022	ESRC-SWDTP	1+3 PhD Sustainable Futures studentship

SELECTED AWARDS

2026	Festival of PGR Research	Poster Competition STEMM second place
2025	University of Exeter	<u>Images of Research</u> PGR runner up
2024	University of Exeter	Dean's Commendation for PGR Academic Citizenship
2024	AI for Net Zero Conference	Poster competition runner up

REFEREES

- Professor Saffron O'Neill, Professor of Geography - S.ONeill@exeter.ac.uk
- Professor Harry West, Professor of Anthropology - H.G.West@exeter.ac.uk