MINUTES OF ORGANIC GROUP MEETING

THURSDAY 30TH NOVEMBER 2008.

Present; Colm Grant, Monica and Russ Smallwood, Jenny Craven, Liam Oconnor, Noel McLaughlin, and Therese Morgan.

Apologies ; John and Mary Reilly and Sinead McCann and Sue Farren.

There was a presentation from Russ on keeping poultry. If the hens are allowed to run about freely the raised beds need to be protected or they will eat the produce. A secure hen house and run is especially needed to keep out foxes. Good ventilation and a dry environment important. Buy a few hens at the start and build up the numbers gradually. If there is food lying around this could attract rats. Plans for a henhouse can be taken from the internet. Water and other containers need to be cleaned everyday.

The breed of light Sussex are good for eating, have an easy temperament but give small eggs.

If there are cats and dogs about this will keep out the rats and foxes.

There was also a talk on keeping bees by Jenny Craven.

She is a member of the Foyle beekeepers assoc.

When bees swarm it means the queen is ready to form a new hive.

It costs about e159 to buy a hive. There needs to be a mesh floor in it to check for the veroa mite with the hive on blocks up off the ground.

Within the hive the queen is kept separate she alone lays the eggs. During winter the bees stay in the hive and can be fed a sugary substance. Worker bees bring pollen to the hive.

Before collecting honey the beekeeper uses a smoker on the hive. The bees think this is a forest fire, and they eat the honey which causes them to be sleepy.

It is useful joining a group even before getting a hive in order to learn.

There is a biodiversity farm walk on the farm of David Smith in Culdaff.on Thursday 21st November from 10am to 1pm.

Next meeting last Thursday in November, Thursday 27th November.