

Nuffield Farming Chair's Update January 2025



NUFFIELD
Farming Scholarships

Dear Nuffield Scholar,

Firstly, can I take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year; as I said in Belfast, it makes me hugely proud to be Chair of the Trust for the next two years having been involved with Nuffield since 2005.

As was raised at our AGM, the alumni have a rightful want to be kept informed of our activities throughout the year and not just for an hour in the middle of conference; so with that in mind I plan to write a quarterly update following each Board meeting. Of course, I am always happy to speak to Scholars on a one-to-one basis, so please don't hesitate to phone or email.

Jim and I's first job was to sit down and map out a vision to span both my term as Chair then followed by his own, in other words the next four years. It is clear the Trust has done a huge amount in the last few years to grow Nuffield which has helped us both develop the brand as well as attract a record-breaking number of people to our conference. However, we feel it is now the time to stabilise and consolidate with a heavy focus on the finances of the Trust; sensible reductions in spending married up with an increased level of income. Rupert and his team have already made a great start on the reductions part with savings being made across all areas of operations. I will of course update on this matter as we go through 2025, but it is safe to say the direction of travel is extremely promising with the ultimate goal of a breakeven situation.

The new Board met for the first time on the 12th of December where we welcomed new Trustees Trevor Alcorn, Olivia Champion, Jamie McCoy as well as 2023 returning Scholar Roisin Taylor (as voted by her year group). They have joined the existing Board including Jim Baird, Tom MacMillan, Tanya Robbins, David Rose, Jenna Ross, Nic Snell and Jo Speed along with returning Scholars Lucy MacLennan, Anna Bowen and Chris Taylor.

Our first task was to approve the Nominations Committees recommendations for appointment of Trustees to the various committees and working groups. This has seen a slight change to previous years with less people in each group, however with a bigger focus on individuals skill sets and interests, supported in turn by co-opted alumni or stakeholders working on key areas.

These being as follows:

- Nominations Committee: Chair Tom Rawson (Reporting to Board).
- Communications and Operations: Chair Nic Snell (Reporting to Board).
- Finance: Chair Jim Baird (Reporting to Board).
- Fundraising Working Group: Chair Lucy MacLennan (Reporting to Finance).
- Sustainability Working Group: Chair Tom MacMillan (Reporting to Comms).
- Next Gen Working Group: Chair Anna Bowen (Reporting to Board).
- Future Conference Working Group: Chair Jenna Ross (Reporting to Board).

Applications for this year's Scholarship open on the 29th of January 2025 and close at the end of July 2025. This is where I throw a challenge out to everyone who reads this email, please seek out those potential candidates that you believe will make excellent Nuffield's and encourage them to apply. Practical farming is at the heart of the Trust and in recent years we have seen a drop off in applications from boots on the ground operators. As a dairy farmer I can understand why this has happened as it gets harder to get away from the business, however twenty years ago it seemed impossible for me to leave my cows for eleven weeks to travel around the world, but of course it was exactly the right thing to do. Please bring potentials along to the study groups and conference this year and let them see what

we have to offer, along with the online Q&A sessions with Charlotte Merson. Recruitment is in the hands of our alumni!!!

Following a successful pilot, the 2025 Next-Gen Scholarship awards are currently open and applications need to be completed before 31st January. This year we are repeating dairy, with generous sponsorship commitment from The Trehane Trust to cover two Scholarships for the next five years, and also piloting poultry in Scotland to tie in with the conference in Aberdeen in November. If any of the study groups would be interested in hosting a Next-Gen Scholarship award for 2026 please get in touch.

Rupert and I have a busy start to the year with a series of meetings with both current and potential sponsors. This is obviously important work as we manage over 100 partnerships with Scholars, conference and other sponsors.

The board has approved an increase to the annual donation to £150, this has been driven from a substantial increase in costs since it was last raised in 2014. All 918 members will receive notice in February, when we will move to GoCardless, a new direct debit provider; this will significantly reduce the admin burden and in future give people the option to pay monthly. One constant frustration is that only around forty percent of the current alumni actually pay subscriptions; if everyone who has benefited from a Scholarship paid it would make a huge difference to our finances. If nothing else paying subs is payback for the money someone else has provided for you to do your Scholarship in the first place, a steady repayment period of 107 years by my calculations!

The issue of late submission of reports was rightly raised at the AGM, with a Scholar action plan now in place for the large number of people who have yet to complete their Scholarships. This is now a standing agenda item for the Board, and I will update you in my next report. In summary the Scholars concerned are now putting sponsorship relationships at risk, which is definitely not what we need at the moment.

The 2025 Nuffield Farming Conference will be held in Aberdeen over the 18th to the 20th November. There will be 28 presenting Scholars as well as the 2025 Next-Gen cohort. The Board have decided to move the AGM to late afternoon/early evening on the Tuesday prior to the Welcome Buffet. This will give far more time for all important discussions and Q&A of the top team. E-voting will again take place, however the plan is to put videos online from all potential Trustee candidates prior to the AGM.

Finally, a word from our Patron, The Duke of Gloucester who sends all at Nuffield Farming his warmest regards and a prosperous New Year.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch.

T Rawson

Tom Rawson
Nuffield Farming Chair
07881940219
rawsondairying@outlook.com

You are receiving this email as a Nuffield Farming Scholar. If you do not want to receive any communications from the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, please email office@nuffieldscholar.org