



CHAIR'S REPORT FOR 2024

WYN OWEN NSch

Wow! – Where did those two years go? It was an immense pleasure and a privilege to become Chair of NFST at the AGM in Cardiff in November 2022, however I find it hard to believe that my two year term is already nearly at an end. I was never in any doubt of the responsibility that comes with becoming chair of such a prestigious and special organisation and although the time has flown, I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity, the camaraderie, the challenges and the continuous learning.

TRUSTEE BOARD

I have been extremely fortunate to have a tremendously capable, positive and proactive group of Trustees to work with and am grateful to them all for their considerable contributions in many ways. However, I must mention two in particular:

Tom Rawson has been an invaluable sounding block and confidant over the past two years as well as being a supporting rock. He has also willingly and competently taken on several key additional projects during this term as Vice Chair including Chairing the Exeter 2023 Conference organising committee, launching of the NextGen Nuffield Scholarship (resulting in three outstanding dairy candidates from Northern Ireland successfully completing the pilot programme) and also taking a key role in the organisation of this year's conference in Belfast.

Trustee David Rose has eagerly and proactively taken up the baton of something close to my heart namely - engaging the alumni. He has spent hundreds of hours communicating with Nuffield Scholars from across the decades by e-mail, old fashioned snail mail and telephone. He has also purposefully re-energised the year groups and personally visited a large number of Scholars, often those with whom we had lost touch. His initiative continues to grow through podcasts, social media, events and celebrations of particular year groups. I firmly believe that whilst we all owe Nuffield

a huge debt of gratitude, we also have so much still to gain from this unique family. Those Scholars who are no longer engaging are losing out on a very special relationship and similarly we are all less enriched by not engaging with them.

Trustees held our away-day in Warwickshire in June to consider strategies for the future and these two days were extremely insightful and productive. A series of themed workshops were led by different Trustees with a Board meeting being held on the final morning to agree on and implement future actions. For me one of several "light bulb" moments was the realisation that whilst Nuffield has historically been extremely good at communicating the undoubted benefits of a Nuffield Scholarship to an individual, the longer term cumulative benefit is the greater impact that Scholar can have on their business, their sector and their communities. This was termed the "ripple effect" at the away day and I suspect that this concept may become a key concept for promoting Nuffield in future.



Sponsors Dinner during Trustees Away-day

NEW DIRECTOR

Rupert Alers-Hankey officially became Director of NFST on January 1st 2024 and very quickly got to know the nature, the mechanics and the drivers for the Trust. He has been particularly pro-active in getting out and about to events and meeting as many Nuffield Scholars and stakeholders as he can. Rupert has re-structured the Nuffield Team with more clearly defined roles and greater responsibility and autonomy for the Team who have embraced this. He has proven to be an extremely capable no nonsense implementer, and we are extremely fortunate to have secured his services as our Director. Rupert has no illusions in terms of the challenges ahead for the Trust and in conjunction with Trustees, the sub-committees, working groups and other stakeholders has a clear view of the long term goals. From the Chair's perspective I greatly appreciate his openness, straightforwardness and easy co-operation. I wish Rupert all the very best for his first Conference in Belfast and a long and successful term as our Director. I would also like to thank Mike Vacher for his long service as our Director and for his support during the first half of my Chairmanship, it was my Great pleasure to present him with an honorary Nuffield Scholarship in Exeter last November.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Our core business of course is awarding travel scholarships to individuals working in agriculture, food and associated industries. The Trust received an unprecedented number of completed applications in 2024, with an extremely high standard of candidates. Huge credit is due all those who have in any way encouraged or supported potential applicants and particularly Charlotte, our Programme Delivery Manager. Following Trustees' decision last year to remove the cap on the number of Scholarships awarded, NFST were delighted to report the award of twenty four UK Scholarships for 2025. Having met them all, I have no doubt that standards are as high as ever and that we have a tremendous group of

highly capable and diverse Scholars. We offer them hearty congratulations and look forward to following and supporting them, over the next two years and beyond. This of course wouldn't be possible without our sponsors to whom we are exceptionally grateful and eager to support the development of positive mutually beneficial relationships between sponsors and their Scholars.

The accredited reports initiative continues to grow and develop in partnership with the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) at Aberystwyth University. A milestone in this initiative was the graduation of Tim Stephens NSch last summer, with the first full MSc awarded through this programme which enables Nuffield Scholars to build upon their Nuffield credits by completing further distance learning modules. This clear pathway is an excellent optional opportunity for those who choose to combine their Nuffield journey with high level professional CPD and is clearly aligned with our goal to develop future leaders.

FINANCE

NFST remains financially strong with healthy reserves, and our finances are constantly and capably monitored and scrutinised by a strong and hugely experienced finance sub-committee ably chaired by Tom Rawson. However, Trustees are aware that recent poor performance of investments, combined with continuing inflation and a continued annual operating deficit. The situation is being closely monitored with the recognition that the fundamental challenge for the Trust is to raise considerably more income in future and several initiatives have been implemented with a view to achieving this. In particular, the fundraising committee has been reinstated with some extremely experienced members who have developed and are currently in the process of implementing a new fundraising strategy for the future.

NUFFIELD INTERNATIONAL

One of the additional privileges and responsibilities of being the Chair of NFST UK is to sit on the Board of Nuffield International (NI) which has given me an additional perspective on the important work that NI does. NI continues to grow and develop and it's crucial to Nuffield UK that it continues to do so. The Contemporary Scholars Conference (CSC) in particular is an important and life changing experience for UK Scholars with its high level content and perspective challenge. Having now personally experienced five CSCs, the traditional melting pot of Australian, Canadian and New Zealand Scholars continues to be enriched by Scholars from Brazil, Chile, Japan, Poland, USA and others. The extremely well organised and highly praised (by UK Scholars) pre CSC in London is now well established as the springboard for the true start of the Scholarship, serving as a lead-in to the CSC and often leading to on-going travel and/or a Global Focus Programme (GFP). However, the GFP continues to pose a challenge for greater involvement by UK Scholars despite conversely becoming a key component for Nuffield Scholars from most other countries, including newer countries as they come on board as full members. On a final NI note, please note in your diaries the All-Ireland Triennial Conference in May 2026.



2024 Scholars and me at the CSC in Brazil this year

AND FINALLY...

As I reflect back on my two years as Chair I particularly appreciate the opportunity to get to know the 2023 and 2024 Nuffield Scholars, it was impossible not to be inspired by their infectious enthusiasm and passion. The privilege of spending time with them at the Pre-CSC and the CSC is immense and allowed me in many ways to re-live my Scholarship vicariously and I am extremely grateful to them for being so open and welcoming. John Alvis told me once that the secret of Nuffield's success is that we don't become old as an organisation, because we consistently recruit a new cohort of Scholars every year who annually inject new energy, enthusiasm and insight into the Nuffield family.

Trustees are extremely grateful for the sterling work to the 2024 Conference Organising committee led by Ciaran Hamill and supported by the Nuffield Team. We look forward to an excellent, insightful and productive few days in Belfast. Finally, we are extremely grateful to all our sponsors who are instrumental to the operations and success of NFST, with particular thanks due to Elizabeth Creak Charitable Trust, our Title Sponsor, and AHDB and Fane Valley our Main and Principal Conference Sponsors. All of the above takes an enormous amount of time, expertise and commitment to implement and I would like to particularly thank Claire Laidler (Office Manager), Lindsay Woods (Project Manager) and Charlotte Merson (Programme Delivery Manager) for their substantial contribution, commitment and effort over the past year.

I look forward to seeing you all in Belfast and indeed in Aberdeen in 2024 and many more Nuffield conferences thereafter...

Yours in Nuffield

Wyn