



14 December 2020

Dear Members and friends,

As this hugely different and difficult year draws to a close, we want to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and also to bring you up to date with our current activity and some of our hopes and plans for next year.

2020 Annual General Meeting

We were finally able to hold our 2020 AGM via Zoom at the end of November. It was gratifying that there were more 'virtual' attendees than we have seen at 'physical' AGMs for some years. The draft Minutes will be circulated to Members in due course, but the highlights included a presentation of the 2019 calendar year Accounts by Fiona Hawkins of James Cowper Kreston. She made the point that the Accounts under review present a snapshot of the Society's status before the onset of the COVID pandemic early this year, so the 2020 Accounts will look very different due to the almost complete lack of commercial revenues this past year.

Two trustees, Nellie Redmond and Jon Drew, also talked in some detail about the Society's evolving situation, and the need for the Board to adopt radical measures to keep the Society operating and compliant with corporate and charitable best practice.

Judging by the feedback from some Members after the AGM, there is now a much better understanding of our position, and we will continue to be as open and honest as we move forward.

Board of Management

Two trustees stood down at the AGM, Sarah Herriman for personal reasons, and Chris Turner because he had completed four years as an extremely hard-working trustee and 2019 Show Chairman. The Board of Trustees wish to thank him particularly for his dedication and commitment, as well as for his depth of knowledge. We will not be letting him go too far!

The Newbury & District Agricultural Society

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We anticipate that the 2021 AGM will take place in late Spring. Prior to that, we will be working hard on looking at governance issues as the existing corporate documents and structures are no longer fit for purpose. Amongst our objectives will be to see how we can attract to the Board of Management some new blood with a wide range of commercial, charitable, and professional expertise.

As for many, it has not been at all easy this year for members of the Board of Management, particularly as most of the Trustees have full time jobs elsewhere. Everyone has worked very hard on behalf of the Society, with individual Trustees taking responsibility for different facets of the necessary tasks. The Board has been meeting formally every month, as well as generating a lot of email traffic in the absence of face-to-face meetings!

Fixed Assets Review Group

Savills are working hard on their research from which will flow their recommendations to the Board about the Showground. They are currently assessing the commercial property sector's appetite for getting involved in the Showground, or part of it. We do not expect to hear much more until February at the earliest.

2021 prospects

Much will depend on the evolution of the pandemic and how central government and our local authority respond to it. It is pleasing to record that there is plenty of interest in holding events on the Showground throughout the Spring and Summer months. Contracts are being sent out, and fingers are crossed that the events come to fruition despite the current uncertainties and difficulties for all concerned.

The COVID test and vaccination centre on the Showground is busy and the tenancy has been extended until the end of March. It was particularly gratifying that two employees of the centre told a trustee very recently how grateful they were that we had allowed the centre to occupy the site, thus ensuring employment for all involved. This is a salutary reminder of the spectre of unemployment, particularly for many young people. We will soon be enquiring whether the centre might remain on site, albeit in a different location, through the summer months.

Our new website is under construction and will focus initially on maximising income generation from letting the Showground. The old websites will go 'offline' at the end of December and there may be a short break before the new one is available. We will continue to encourage Members, friends and professional partners to make use of it as a channel for communication with management. The email link is feedback@newburysshowground.co.uk

We very much want to reinstate the 'on farm' competitions in 2021, even though there will not be a Royal County of Berkshire Show. In coming months, the committee will be looking for sponsors and assessing interest from farming Members.



Staff and volunteers

None of what we are doing would be possible without the Society's hardworking staff. Susan Layton, Jan Murray, Pam Rodrigues and Amber Wernham have been flexible, committed, and good humoured throughout this year. They truly deserve the sincere gratitude of the Trustees and all Members. Volunteers also continue to provide good support on the Showground whenever asked.

To all of them, and to all Members, friends, and stakeholders, we send our very best wishes for Christmas. Much has changed and there will be further developments as we continue to adjust to what is achievable, but there is also plenty to look forward to in 2021.

Kind regards

Alison Brown

Chairman, for and on behalf of the Trustees of the Newbury & District Agricultural Society