

YORKSHIRE RURAL SUPPORT NETWORK

ANNUAL 2020 REPORT



Christine Ryder

WELCOME FROM OUR CHAIRMAN CHRISTINE RYDER

In this very same space a year ago, I reflected on how the world seems to be an ever changing place and that I wasn't convinced all was changing for the better. Who could have envisaged then how much those words would ring true just months later when we were all sent into lockdown?

Undoubtedly, these last 12 months have been trying times, not just because of the coronavirus pandemic but also, as any farmer will tell you, because of challenging weather patterns and continued industry uncertainty. Before there was only one news story in town, successive storms battered the UK and parts of Yorkshire causing severe flooding and culminated in the wettest February on record.

The challenges for us all have been clear – financially and emotionally – but I continue to take enormous heart from a great swell of innovation shown within our rural communities as people embrace a change of course as best they can. We are often referred to as a resilient lot and while there is plenty of evidence to back this up, we cannot possibly feel at our strongest all of the time.

We know there continues to be a great deal of worry and frustration about; that there are plenty of people out there who need our help. In times like these – and there will be brighter days to come – the importance of being there to provide support for people who need it is abundantly clear. As such, I'm incredibly thankful for all the wonderful, hardworking individuals who go above and beyond for our rural communities.

As Chair of the Yorkshire Rural Support Network, it is hugely comforting to witness the continued endeavours of so many complementary partner organisations. I would like to give a special mention to Kate Dale for her steadfast support, both to me and to others. I know that her wonderfully kindhearted email messages are welcomed by many, and not least so through the course of recent months.

While this has been a year like no other, rest assured that the Rural Support Network is continually examining how best to support our community's health and wellbeing. We are committed to raising awareness of the vital support that exists. Whatever the circumstances, our mission goes on. As we move through autumn and into winter, we're here for you.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR COORDINATOR KATE DALE

One definition of the word 'momentous' is 'of great importance or significance, especially in having a bearing on future events'. There is no doubt that 2020 will certainly go down in history as a momentous year. Despite all our events and activities coming to an abrupt halt at the end of March, we had already had a very busy Winter period and have continued to remain steadfast throughout the difficult months since March. Please be reassured that our members continue to do whatever they can in support of our farming communities throughout Yorkshire.

FARMER HEALTH CHECKS

Usually our healthchecks take place during Autumn and Winter. Fortunately, before lockdown intervened, we saw a total of 231 people on visits to 8 different locations. This Winter, we are taking our health and wellbeing messages to marts' social media channels and the press. We also plan to have Farming Help contact details displayed prominently at the marts.



PLOUGH SERVICE JANUARY 2020

Future Farmers of Yorkshire members, James Johnson and Hugh Shedden generously contributed to the Plough Service at Ripon Cathedral in January. Grateful thanks to RABI Welfare Officer for the North, John Basnett and Rev Diane Gamble, Agricultural Chaplain attached to Thirsk Mart, for their readings and to The Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire Johanna Ropner who gave an address in support of the farming community.

We hope the Plough Service can take place again on Sunday 10th January 2021.



INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGES

A highlight of our Network meetings before circumstances halted our face to face meetings, was a presentation by Susan Briggs of The Tourism Network in February. Susan, a passionate marketeer, spoke about the vast untapped potential of rural tourism.



We took part in the Great Yorkshire Virtual Show in July, with a 'Charities Showcase' video feature allowing us to offer messages to the farming community from RABI, Addington Fund, Samaritans, FCN and Perennial.

The show also included a spotlight on our Women In Farming Network in which network members Anna Longthorp, Jennie Palmer and Molly Coombs filmed a Zoom call and discussed the impact of coronavirus on their rural businesses with Kate Dale. Meanwhile, proceeds from an official GYS beer box, marketed by Black Sheep Brewery, raised £106.25 for RABI.

PEER TO PEER MENTORING

We supported students at Bishop Burton College near Beverley with a visit from two Future Farmers of Yorkshire members. Angela Kirkwood and Joe Weston gave insights into their backgrounds and industry roles, emphasising that the more you put in, the more rewarding it is. Our trip to Askham Bryan College was put on hold but two FFY members are lined up to meet students in March 2021.



MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS WORKSHOPS

At the start of the year, our Mind Your Own Business workshops were held at Reagarth Farm, Helmsley; The Regional Agricultural Centre, Harrogate; Askham Bryan College, York; and the Skipton NFU office at Skipton Auction Mart. Places were heavily subsidised and the workshops were led by members of The Institute of Agricultural Secretaries and Administrators, offering valuable insights into managing business costs.

WOMEN IN FARMING NETWORK



Our April visit to Spilman Farming at Sessay near Thirsk sadly had to be cancelled but we are delighted to have Olivia Spilman as one of our presenters at our virtual **Autumn Gathering on Tuesday 13th October 2020 from 10.30am to 11.30am**. Fellow presenters will include – pictured below – Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Ripon and FCN Board Member; Susan Briggs, Director of The Tourism Network; Dr Caroline Knott, Consultant Psychologist with TEWV NHS Trust and Rachel Hallos, West Riding NFU Chair and farmer.

Savills are generously sponsoring the event which also has the support of Barclays Agriculture, with Judith Wood, Agriculture Manager with Barclays acting as Chair. Please keep an eye on the website and social media for more details, see www.yas.co.uk/women-in-farming-autumn-gathering

Our Autumn Gathering replaces our usual Annual Conference. Last year's conference at Pavilions of Harrogate in October 2019 was our most successful to date. A record number attended and a lively selection of ladies contributed to an energetic and inspiring event which was kindly sponsored by Barclays, Savills and Morrisons.

More than 130 delegates heard from a line up of speakers that included Sophie Throup, Head of Senior Corporate Affairs (Agriculture) at Morrisons; Becky Waring, owner of Cherry View Milk at Cherry Burton near Beverley; Emma Mosey, Co-owner of Minskip Farm Shop near Boroughbridge and Faith Douglas, part-time Curator at Thorp Perrow Arboretum and owner of Forest Bathing UK.



To broaden the WIF's reach this year, we launched a Yorkshire Women in Farming Facebook page in April, slightly earlier than planned but as a response to being able to maintain a connection and reach more women during challenging times. The group now has over 250 members and we plan to generate more interest and engagement over the Winter period by providing a series of 'Talking Heads'. These short clips will aim to inspire, inform and include something for everyone in the group.

Once again, many women have had to take the strain during recent months and we are committed to providing help, support and friendship to all those who would like to join us.

A small grant from The Prince's Countryside Fund will help us to provide useful and interesting content.



NETWORK NEWS

2020 marks FCN's 25th anniversary of 'walking with' farmers and their families offering support on issues, from foot and mouth and flooding to mental health issues and family disputes.

Its year started with the Resilient Farmer, Doug Avery's UK tour 'Shift Happens'. At Pavilions on the Great Yorkshire Showground, Doug spoke to a room of farming families about resilience. Little did we know then just how much this would be needed in 2020.



RABI is supporting 79 retired or disabled people on a regular basis in North Yorkshire, plus another 20 in East Yorkshire and 14 in West and South Yorkshire.

It is fielding frequent requests from working and non-working farmers and farmworkers, many of whom have been affected by the virus pandemic. All staff are working from home for the foreseeable future, but their support for those in need continues

RABI Helpline 0808 281 9490



Yorkshire and Humberside Samaritans has once again renewed its commitment to the Yorkshire Rural Support Network.

The Samaritans' confidential freephone line (116123) and email address (jo@smaritans.org) are available 24/7 to anyone who feels stressed, isolated or just simply low. Samaritans' Regional Coordinator for its Rural Support Initiative is David Moyles who can be reached via davidm.yorksams@gmail.com or 07732372207.



FCN Helpline 03000 111 999

FarmWell.org.uk was also launched, a one stop shop with up to date information on the agricultural sector via an easy to access website. Despite the pandemic, FCN continues taking calls to offer support via its helpline.

Cancelled events meant lost fundraising opportunities but luckily, FCN has received donations from loyal supporters and on 10th-11th October, FCN's BIG 25 campaign will see friends and families raise funds by going on walks, cycle rides, etc in their local area.



The CLA is working relentlessly to help members weather the Covid-19 storm, and the challenges beyond. The CLA North office has dealt with many Covid-19 related enquiries and continues to provide an efficient and seamless advisory service.

Its Rural Powerhouse campaign is championing the rural economy and what government should do to unlock its potential, such as better digital connectivity, investment in skills and more profitable and sustainable farming. The CLA is also lobbying for a delay in the transition away from direct payments as it believes farmers and government will not be ready to start this in a few months' time.



Addington had a record 64 tenants last year and after a pause, it is now accepting new applications for retirement homes again. The charity expects to be busy in the years ahead, with the new Agriculture Bill set to help farmers who want to retire. The pandemic has led to £200,000 in

fundraising losses but Addington has benefitted from sizeable donations, notably from The NFU Charitable Trust and The Hutchinson Charitable Trust. Its sights are now set on reaching 100 retirement homes and owning at least one in every county in England and Wales.

For more details, visit Addington's new website at

www.addingtonfund.org.uk or call 01926 620135



Helping people in horticulture
Perennial

In the first month of lockdown, calls to Perennial's helpline rose by nearly 400%. Its marketing and fundraising team worked with horticultural trade bodies to offer support for their members.

The charity is also providing support concerning mental health and redundancy. Since January, it has raised nearly £2m in welfare benefits for its service users. Perennial has gardens which are open to the public, generate income and support trainees. This year, its York Gate garden in Adel, Leeds was granted Grade II national heritage status.

YORKSHIRE FEDERATION OF YOUNG FARMERS CLUBS

Our rural youth organisations are vital points of contact and a means of support through these challenging times and The Yorkshire Federation of Young Farmers Clubs continue to encourage Clubs and members to keep in touch with each other. Many competitions have been moved online to provide interest and continuity. Any sponsorship for the online competitions would be much appreciated and would give any Company or Business great promotion and exposure to a big number of viewers on social media. Winter Club Meetings can currently take place with 15 members and two leaders. These will provide a vital lifeline to many young people. **Please make contact at E: office@yfyc.org.uk**



For further information, please get in touch with our Coordinator, Kate Dale:

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Regional Agricultural Centre | Great Yorkshire Showground | Harrogate | HG2 8NZ

T: 01423 546217 | M: 07912 495604 | E: kated@yas.co.uk

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