

# CEO UPDATE



## One year in...

My first anniversary with the Society was on the 8th of August 2023 and what a whistlestop year it has been. For those of you who have got to know me, you know that I have a fear of the unknown! I like to plan, prepare, think things through, look at alternatives and hopefully arrive at a good outcome. That process will be easier next year having already been through it all once.

We are in the process of restructuring the way that we work and two key areas that we are working on now are the finance and sales parts of the Society. The Finance Committee, formed in April, have held a few zoom meetings throughout the year and addressed some areas that needed particular attention to make sure that we comply with all our obligations as a charity. This shared responsibility for the finances is much welcomed by me and the trustees of the Society. It is very important that we keep the Society in a positive and good financial shape. The Finance Committee makes recommendations to Council at each meeting and each subject is discussed fully and either ratified by Council or referred for further investigation and it is working well.

The draft Budget for 2023/24 has been prepared and we have had some difficult decisions and discussions to keep us solvent. The 2023/24 financial year will bring focus on costs and justifying the spend and also focus on alternative income streams to offset our costs wherever possible.

Having been through a full year now, I've experienced the full packed summer period of Shows and Sales, and now personally know what's coming next year and be better prepared for the onslaught of activities. This will help us make these events bigger and better each year and make the most of the opportunity to showcase our breed and spread the word about the "Suffolk Advantage", attracting more people to our ethos and genetics to benefit the members of the Society.

## SALES COMMITTEE

We have formed a Sales Committee with the purpose of making the Society Sales more inclusive. We will be taking the whole sales calendar and process apart piece by piece and adopting a 'five W and one H' (Who, What, Why, When, Where and How) policy to each facet of the Sales function. The work on this started this month and is no mean feat to complete this task to arrive at the best outcome. Recognising that whatever we do will involve change, changes may not suit everyone, but arriving at the best option that will suit most members and our purchasers is our objective. Adding further opportunities for members to market their sheep, thus adding value to the membership of our established Society. It's highly unlikely that there will be any major changes or innovation for the 2024 Sales calendar so rest easy. Any proposed changes would be fed back to the Branches for discussion and comment from the membership prior to implementation.

### 1886 HERITAGE SUFFOLK

1886 Heritage Suffolk is a huge opportunity that we must capitalise on, and I need to create the space in the diary of events that will let me focus on this project over the next couple of months.

This opportunity to take us beyond the farm gate, engage with the commercial world of the industry and properly market the benefits of including Suffolk genetics in flocks which pays dividends beyond expectations to every part of the supply chain.

Promoting the taste, texture, succulence and overall eating experience coupled with the speed of growth which also delivers a reduction in carbon footprint is key to being successful as a breed and a brand. In the first 8 months of the three to five-year plan since its conception, we have made ground way beyond my expectations. There has been a positive reception at the meetings that I have had the opportunity to make at various shows and sales over the summer. This proves that the concept has merit and is therefore worth pursuing.

### SALES

The sales have all gone well over the summer months with big numbers of sheep changing hands. For every extra Ram that is sold, we can calculate that another 100 – 150 Suffolk derived lambs will be

hitting the market at some point. This means the exponential steps that we are achieving through our current direction to recover market share is working. We need to build on that throughout the next year. You can see all the individual Sales Reports on our website. We aim to report on Sales as soon as is practical after the sale itself.

### FLOCK COMPETITION OPEN DAY

The National Flock Competition Overall winner for 2023, Mr Stephen Cobbald hosted the view day as per the custom, at his farm at Acton Hall, Acton, Suffolk and what a treat for all who attended.

Around 100 guests enjoyed a delicious four course lunch with roasted Suffolk lamb served as the main course. Trophies and certificates were presented and everyone given a tour of Acton Hall's farming operations and the Lavenham Flock. Society President Alastair Barkley thanked Stephen for a great day and generous hospitality. Full report and photos will be available on our website soon.

### 2024 YEARBOOK

The 2024 Yearbook preparation is underway, please book adverts and submit reports/artwork or information before the deadline. We will push advertising to both breeder and trade over the next few

weeks to help offset the cost of production. This is our annual publication with both printed and digital versions offering opportunity to publicise your efforts, sell your stock and put your flock in the spotlight to the many breeders new and old that need information.

So that is a summary of the important progress since the last CEO update, now we need to focus on what's happening for the next three months. We have the membership renewal and Autumn Returns going out imminently, no mean feat for the Office to achieve. I am looking forward to Agri Expo at the end of October, where I have been invited to be on an industry panel. December offers an opportunity to focus on the 1886 Heritage Suffolk project and move towards bringing that more to the market next year where your membership of the Suffolk Sheep Society, registering and birth notifying more of your crop, particularly ram lambs will reap the benefits.

Council meet again in October so preparation and information gathering and dissemination prior to the meetings helps reduce discussion and promote decision which in turn helps us take steps forward, faster and in a positive direction for all concerned.

I assure you all that the breed and the Society of which you are a member is in a very good place for its future development. We have a good Council who want to make a difference, embrace change where appropriate and carefully map out where we want to get to in the next few years of our existence. There will be a bit of pain in the transition but that will be short lived and the benefits that we envisage being delivered will ensure the future of the Suffolk Breed as a major contributor to the lamb industry for years to come.

There is so much more happening in the Society than I can possibly include in this report for up-to-date news and views events and information keep your eye on social media and the website.

The next update will be with you just before the Christmas break and lambing time and so the cycle starts again!

