

News from your Nuffield Board

Welcome to the first edition of 'News from your Nuffield Board'. At the conference in Cardiff a request was made to provide better communications.

We wish to keep you all informed about the Boards current priorities, current initiatives and current concerns along with the decisions the Board have made and the rationale behind them. Whilst there will be issues that must remain confidential, we aim to be as open and as transparent as possible.

Structure of the Board

The current Board consists of twelve Scholars and two co-opted External members. The Board Scholar members are Wyn Owen, the Chairman, Tom Rawson, the Vice Chairman, Mary Monro, Jim Baird, Vicky Robinson, Gus Selby, Nic Snell, David Gardner, David Rose, Jo Speed, Tanya Robbins and Jenna Ross. The co-opted members are Richard Percy and Tom MacMillan bringing specialist knowledge and insight onto the Board. Richard in the area of finance and Tom in education.

The Board also has two committees: Finance, traditionally chaired by the Vice Chair, so in this case Tom; and Communications chaired by Nic. Other Board members also have specific responsibilities and lead on specific items such as mentoring, sustainability, fund raising, etc.

The Board meets four times a year in London, whereas the committees meet virtually.

All Board members give their time freely and we aim to make decisions on your behalf in the best interests of the Trust, its current Scholars, alumni and future Scholars. The Board delivers good Governance for the Trust in line with Charity Commission guidelines.

At present the two principal priorities of the Board are ensuring a smooth transition as we change our Director along with bringing 2020, 2021 and 2022 scholars successfully through their studies to present at a bumper conference in November.

Appointment of Rupert Alers-Hankey as our Director Designate

A sub-committee of the Board consisting of Wyn Owen, Tom Rawson, Richard Percy, Vicky Robinson and Nic Snell along with our immediate past Chairman Chris Graf Grote formed the selection panel to recruit our new Director. The selection process included two rounds of interviews along with psychometric testing and the opportunity for face-to-face discussion with the Director. Three candidates were taken through to final interview including two ladies, a mix of ages and backgrounds with one Nuffield Scholar. All were excellent, but the panel were unanimous in their conclusion that Rupert stood out from the others and recommended his appointment to the Board. The Board approved his appointment. His similar background to Mike's and his location not far away from the current Nuffield office are co-incidental.

Rupert will work part-time through 2023 as part of a structured handover.

Scholar Year Groups

Four Scholar year groups will be travelling in 2023 which is unprecedented in our history and is the legacy of Covid. This represents a significant additional workload for Mike and his team. We expect to have over 40 Scholars presenting at the conference in November.

Covid has represented a real challenge for the Board. When your core purpose is to offer international travel scholarships an almost total ban on international travel for two years is an issue! Overall, we are pleased with how Nuffield has come through Covid and not missed a year of Scholars and only missed one physical conference, albeit that was held online. The conference in Cardiff was the best ever in terms of attendance and had a real buzz about it.

We particularly want to thank Scholars who kept the Alumni engaged by leading webinars for Nuffield during the darkest days of lockdown. If 2023 pans out as we hope the impact of Covid will be behind us by the end of the year in terms of travelling although the back up of Scholars presenting may well impact the 2024 conference too.

The experience of current Scholars over Covid has focused the Board's thoughts on 'What constitutes a Nuffield Scholarship?' The Board is determined to keep international travel at the core of the Nuffield experience and Scholars are required to undertake two months travel, including four weeks travelling independently to complete a Nuffield scholarship along with presenting at the conference and completing the report in its new format.

Vicky and Gus are the 'returning' Scholars on the Board. The inclusion of returning Scholars is important as it ensures the Board are up to date with the current Scholar experience. Usually, a Scholar is chosen each year from the cohort that are just about to complete their scholarship. To be eligible to take up the role, a Scholar must have completed their scholarship to ensure that they have an overview of the full Scholar experience and to select a 'returning Scholar' from a year group it is felt only fair that nearly all of that year group have presented. Only seven 2020 scholars presented at the conference in Cardiff which would have excluded most of that cohort from standing, so the Board decided to delay the appointment of Vicky and Gus's replacements until late 2023 when we expect both of them to stand down and three new Trustees to be appointed. One from each of the 2020, 2021 and 2022 cohorts. Throughout 2023 Vicky and Gus will represent the current Scholars on the Board.

The 2023 Super Conference

The challenge of accommodating over 40 presenting Scholars at this year's conference has resulted in a super conference on 14th, 15th and 16th November at Sandy Park in Exeter. This venue is attached to the Chiefs Rugby ground which many of you will know as a landmark alongside the M5 as you approach Exeter from the North. It has the capacity to host our requirements for both the chosen format of the conference and offers 250 rooms for over night accommodation. Having considered a number of options we have decided upon a format based upon two groups in separate auditoriums presenting concurrently.

New Initiatives

Nuffield 100 is the name given to a recent Board 'strategic review' and it commits us to seeking to work with other Charities and to that end we are planning to launch two new types of scholarships. One will be for young Nuffield's and the other for the more mature Scholar with an emphasis on the academic world and will offer the opportunity to study the application of agricultural science beyond the research environment.

Fund Raising

Julian Darling has led a campaign to secure a number of significant endowments and has been instrumental to the successful fund raising since he joined the Board and continues as the NFST Ambassador to make approaches. David Gardner is Lead Trustee for fund raising is doing work to further develop funds for the short and longer term. These now fund several scholarships in perpetuity and have significantly strengthened our balance sheet. Nuffield has more scholarship sponsors than we require each year which is very healthy for the Trust, but these don't cover all our overheads. 'Friends of Nuffield' has been launched to fill this gap. 'Friends of Nuffield' is a sponsorship/marketing opportunity aimed at the commercial sector and is seeking £2,500 per annum over five years from each 'Friend'. We are hoping our Alumni will help us with introductions to potential 'Friends' and at the conference Roger Mercer challenged all the Scholars present to each secure one introduction over the next year. Eight 'Friends' have been recruited to date with others pending.

2022 also saw us create a new restricted fund from the Nuffield in Russia fund and part of the Jill Willows legacy. It will support Nuffield International's work in seeking to bring new countries into the Nuffield family and will work alongside a significant legacy from an Australian scholar for the same purpose.

Health & Safety

Tom Rawson is the lead Trustee for health and safety and the Board maintains a risk register. By far our greatest risk is a very serious accident at a Nuffield event on a farm or in a food processing facility. Chris Graf Grote and Mike Vacher addressed this with Group Chairs at a meeting in Cardiff. Going forward a risk assessment must be completed for each event and submitted to the office two weeks prior to the event taking place. If such an assessment isn't completed the event cannot go ahead as a Nuffield branded event. Group Chairs do a fantastic job on behalf of the Trust and the Board looks forward to this initiative going forward successfully during 2023.

New Scholars and Alumni engagement

We have always relied heavily on Scholars helping to recruit new applications and this seems to bring the most success. Jenna Ross joins the Board having revitalised activities in Scotland and driven a significant increase in Scholar applications. During 2023 she will be sharing the learnings from that successful initiative with other Group Chairs around the Country.

David Rose leads on alumni engagement and is bringing 'lost' Scholars back into the fold. We think they are missing out! He will be contacting Scholars throughout 2023 and looking for help in reconnecting with those we have lost. As part of this David has started up the Nuffield Golf and this is already gathering pace.

We hope you have found this first newsletter useful and we look forward to keeping you up to date with future Board activities.