



NUFFIELD Farming Scholarships

Dear Nuffield Farming Scholar,

I am writing this Summer 2026 update from my kitchen wondering again what the weather might do. Farming is dominated by the ups and downs of rain and shine, whether you believe in climate change or not we are definitely into a different weather pattern; the dries are drier and the wet wetter. This, for our business, has to be the year to over fill the silage clamps to make sure we don't have to buy forage in following the next drought; as someone said to me a few months ago "*don't blame the drought, blame the good year when you didn't grow a surplus*".

Earlier this month the Nuffield Trustees meet for our **annual strategy day** near Coventry. For myself personally it is my final one of I believe nine that I have attended. So of course, the implementation of the "crystal ball gazing" wasn't going to involve me but is of course down to **Jim Baird** and the future Vice Chair along with the new Board.

When I came into the role as Chair, I made a **rather bold statement** that by the time both myself and Jim have completed our terms of office the Trust will no longer operate a deficit. I am glad to report that we have made huge strides in this matter and at the year end of the last financial year we finished with an operational deficit of £65,000, some £50,000 ahead of the original budget set out a year ago. Well done to **Rupert** and his team for implementing yet more savings whilst still delivering an excellent scholarship program; to use the words of Winston Churchill, we are not at the end but hopefully we are at the beginning of the end as oppose the end of the beginning! As uncomfortable as it was to raise the cost of a scholarship to our sponsors, we felt it was necessary in this next phase to achieve our aims. I am also glad to report we have had an excellent response to the increase which I would personally like to thank all those that support us. We all have a job to look after our own organization's first and there would have been some difficult conversations around a number of board tables, many of whom are of course charities like ourselves.

Other areas for discussion included questioning whether we are getting the balance between farmer and allied industry right when it comes to selecting new scholars, mapping out the future of the Next-Gen program, the annual conference cycle and awards as well as future plans for alumni engagement. The output of this will all be a revised NFST strategic plan for 2026-2031. Finally thankyou to our Trustees for all their input over the two days, although the financial situation has dominated thoughts and actions during my tenure we are now truly feeling the benefits of this and more importantly giving us the confidence that the desired end point is not only "do able" but that we can continue to deliver the program to the correct standard.

On the 2nd of June we held a sponsor's dinner welcoming representatives from **AHDB, The Alan and Anne Beckett Scholarship, Central Region Farmers Trust, The Trehane Trust, NFU Mutual Charitable Trust, Poultry Meat Scholarship, Savills, Thomas Henry Foundation** and **The Worshipful Company of Farmers**. During an excellent evening which gave us the opportunity to talk about all things Nuffield with our sponsors

we also heard from 2025 scholars **Ben Andrews**, **Laura Underdown** and **Alex Crawley**. Three great summaries of their travels and I look forward to hearing their full presentations in Leeds in November. It was also good to see two of our selectors, **Diana Allen** and **Jo Price** along with **Rob Burtonshaw**, Chair of West Midlands Region and **Vicky Robinson**, Chair of Central Region.

A huge thank you to the 194 scholars who responded to the scholar survey, your input will make a vital contribution to the **Impact Report**. This will provide yet further evidence to our sponsors of the long-term benefits of the scholarship both for the individual and the industry.

Catherine and I recently attended the **Triennial in Ireland**, this was a brilliant event with a peak attendance of 190 travelling scholars, alumni and partners from 15 countries. Congratulations must go to **Grianne Dwyer**, **Mary Webb** and all the organizing team, it was our first Triennial experience, and it certainly won't be our last! I must also mention **Campbell Tweed** and **Jason Rankin** who expertly led the Northern Ireland leg of the tour, the whole thing was yet a further reminder of the long-term benefits of Nuffield.

The two **Next-Gen tours** start this month for both Regen and Dairy. Thanks again go to all our hosts and good luck to the six scholars, we look forward to hearing about it all in November. Please look out for and touch base with these guys at the Royal Highland Show Nuffield Reception and at Groundswell.

Last weekend our family hosted a leg of the **Global Focus Program** with a group of travelling scholars from Brazil, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, France, Zambia and Ireland. It was a great experience showing them around a very diverse farming county such as West Yorkshire, thanks to **the Wood, Haigh and Fewster Families** for your time and hospitality.

Please book yourselves on for our [Annual Conference](#) this year in my home city of Leeds, organized by **Lindsay Woods** along with **Jo Speed** and **Rob Thornhill** leading the Northern Group. We are very lucky to have the support of our Patron HRH The Duke of Gloucester; this is I am proud to say his 50th year supporting Nuffield Farming, which we will celebrate during proceedings.

Finally, there are many [Nuffield events](#) this Summer from show receptions to sector group tours. We personally are hosting a 50 strong Nuffield Dairy Tour next week...wish us luck!!

Regards,

T Rawson

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