



National Sheep Association Update on current activity

**Delivered at the Annual General Meeting
Thursday 14th August 2014
Westmorland County Showground**



After two wet summers and the terrible snow last spring, 2014 has been a much better year. Most sheep producers experienced a good lambing and this, coupled with mostly favourable weather and excellent grass growth, has led to optimism in the sector.

Our vision is one of the people involved in keeping sheep being enthusiastic, knowledgeable and aspiring to best practice ...



... and those not keeping sheep increasingly aware of the contribution sheep make to society and of the core aspects of the sector.



Optimism is frequently linked to good prices, and while NSA cannot control the market, we do have a responsibility to support the sheep sector in other ways.

NSA's vision is two-fold – that people involved in the sheep sector are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and aspire to best practice – and those not keeping sheep are increasingly aware of the contribution sheep make to society and of the core aspects of the sheep sector.

Measures of Success

Internal

- Membership
- Staff
- Assets



External

- Constructive working relationships
- Practical regulatory framework
- Conservation bodies recognising value of sheep
- Numbers of sheep keepers/sheep
- Sheep efficiency and health measurements improving



In delivering this vision, NSA looks at internal and external measures of success.

Examples of this are pictured – membership recruitment top right and constructive working relationships bottom left, in this instance NFU and NSA jointly presenting a report on the sheep sector to Farming Minister George Eustice.

Measures of Success



Making our assets work for the organisation is vital and a measure of success is the progress made in this area in the last 18 months, making the Sheep Centre at Malvern work much harder for NSA. Our headquarters moved from Firs Farmhouse (bottom left) to the Suffolk Building (top right) in spring 2013, allowing the farmhouse to be let to a commercial company. A mutually beneficial residential rental agreement has also been arranged for Bats Loft (bottom right) and the outbuildings. The Suffolk Building is a ready-built office and, coupled with meeting facilities in the Barn (top right), provides a professional base for NSA activity. There are plans to rename the Suffolk Building (the former home of the Suffolk Sheep Society) in recognition of the recently received legacy.

Vision Document

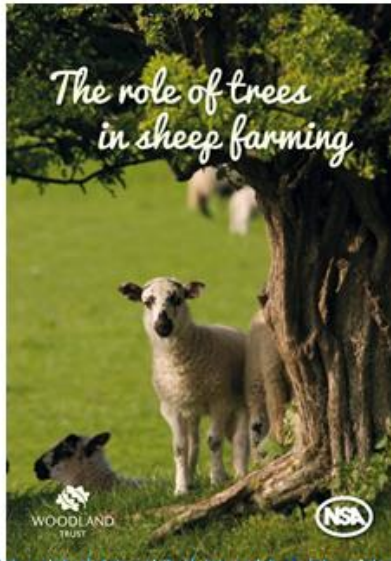


**A VISION FOR BRITISH
LAMB PRODUCTION**



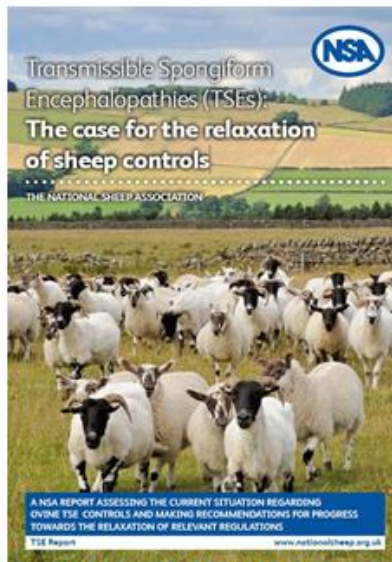
External measures of success include constructive working relationships, a practical regulatory framework, conservation bodies recognising the value of sheep, and improvement of sheep efficiency and health measurements. The *Vision for British Lamb Production* report, released at the NSA Sheep Event on 30th July 2014, covers all these. Jointly produced by NSA and NFU it establishes where the sheep sector currently stands, opportunities and strengths, and the barriers to further progress. It will be used to inform policy makers and lobby bodies, as well as steer NSA activity in the future.

Woodland Trust Report



Another recently published piece is a Woodland Trust leaflet looking at ways to plant more trees on farmland in a way that benefits sheep enterprises rather than usurps productive land. The report represents a positive working relationship with the Woodland Trust while also providing technical information to farmers and showing environmental bodies that the sheep sector takes conservation issues seriously and appreciates and contributes to the balance between livestock farming and the environment.

TSE Report



A considerable volume of work in 2014 has been surrounding TSEs and the need for relaxation of rules linked to scrapie, including carcase splitting. The NSA's TSE report was published earlier in the year and was used to engage key figures in Europe and MEPs. While a firm negative was from received from the European Union about relaxing the rules, the work has highlighted potential benefits within the UK, such as moving from teeth eruption as the point when lamb carcasses need to be split, to a calendar date instead. NSA has engaged with the Food Standards Agency on this point and will continue to push forward with this and use the TSE report to engage with MPs and policy decision makers. Watch this space!

CAP Reform and policy work

"Scottish CAP detail becoming clearer, says NSA Scottish Region"
- NSA Weekly Email Update, July 2014

"Demand for quick progress on Northern Ireland CAP package"
- NSA Weekly Email Update, March 2014

"Welsh CAP decisions must level the UK playing field, says NSA"
- NSA press release May 2014

"CAP issues discussed as NSA spends useful and stimulating day with Secretary of State Owen Paterson"
- NSA press release May 2014



The Strategic Goals (Sustainability, Innovation, Growth, Resilience, Prosperity, Security, Well-being) are supported by the Government's policies in the CAP. The CAP is a key element of the Government's policy in the CAP. The CAP is a key element of the Government's policy in the CAP.

your business your future

CAP reform has clearly been the biggest policy area for the NSA to deal with in 2013 and 2014. Activity has been considerable in all parts of the UK and, while the bulk of the decisions have now been made, there is still a big job to be done in influencing Pillar Two spending and ensuring NSA members understand the changes they face.

Introducing an animal health scheme under Pillar Two is a concept pioneered by NSA that has been gently building momentum for nearly two years now. The concept has attracted increasing interest with a pilot scheme to be launched in Wales and ongoing discussions in England, supported by the Sheep Health and Welfare Group.

Uplands focus

Complementary Role of Sheep in Less Favoured Areas



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The issue of sustainability of sheep farming in the uplands is not one that is going away and the NSA's *Complementary Role of Sheep in Less Favoured Areas* report, published back in 2012, is still of huge relevance and use.

NSA spoke at the Upland Conference this spring, which was notable for the absence of criticism about sheep! It appears that a corner has been turned and environmental bodies have finally acknowledged that grazing animals are vital for biodiversity and the environment. However, there is still a long way to go before this results in changes on the ground and a reduction in the pressure on farmers to cut stocking rates.



NSA is very excited to be involved in a new project in England, funded by RDPE, which will encourage sheep producers to come together in small groups to use a new programme to assess their financial and physical performance and benchmark against comparable businesses. More information will be released soon.

Sheep Farmer magazine



While communication with external groups, be it other agricultural stakeholder or anti-farming groups, is important, so too is the regularity and quality of communication to our own members. Sheep Farmer has had a massive overhaul in the last 12 months, both in terms of content and appearance, and feedback so far has been very positive.



Weekly Email Update

3,002 members
75 breed societies
10 unsubscribers



NSA NEXT GENERATION AMBASSADORS WALK THE SUPPLY CHAIN: The second of five delivery sessions for the NSA Next Generation Ambassador Group took place this week and saw the 11 ambassadors invited to spend two days examining the full extent of the lamb supply chain. Monday (2nd June) involved a day headed by Clayton Market, with thanks to the Livestock Auctioneers Association, with auctioneer Paul Ogden providing an in-depth look into the live-weight market and farmer board member Anthony Harrison tracing a farm walk a few miles down the road. Tuesday (3rd June) then saw Dunbar and Elton host a live-to-dead day coupled with presentation from lamb buyers and sellers and an insight into the flow processors work with requirements for both supply volume and encourage more demand. Many thanks to all our hosts over the two days – the quality and quantity of information provided was superb. The Next NSA Generation programme looks forward to the NSA Marcher Region Young Shepherd of the Year competition tomorrow – good luck to all competitors.

COMMERCIAL RAINFALL AT NSA SCOT SHEEP: It rained virtually all day at Queensferry, Dumfries, Berwickshire on Wednesday (4th June) with commercial rain at times making life difficult for visitors and exhibitors at NSA Scot Sheep. However, visitor numbers were still good and spirits remained high. NSA extends its sympathy to the hosts, John and Jan Macfarlane and family, who had clearly worked as hard to provide an excellent venue, who to have visitors spend the day huddled under umbrellas instead of appreciating the wonderful setting. Visitors became so poor through the day the farm tours were cancelled, but NSA Scottish Region is looking to run a farm walk in the summer to give members a chance to look around the farm. Full report next week.

SCOTSHEEP 2014

your business your future

The Weekly Email Update is increasingly popular, now received by more than 3,000 members and 75 of the 80 breed societies affiliated to NSA. Other signs of how NSA members value the Update is that only 10 people have ever requested to stop receiving the newsletter and the open rate (the top line on the graph) is very high compared to the industry average (the red line).

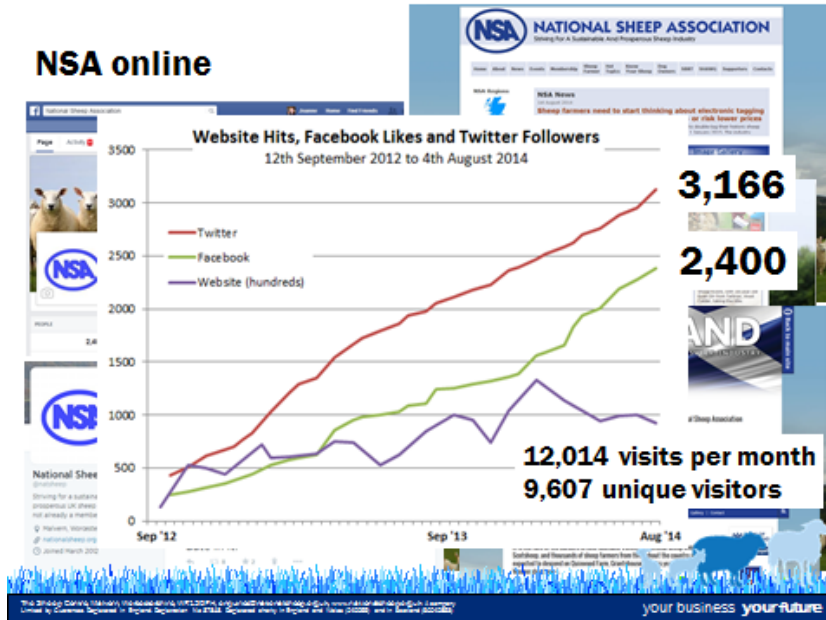
NSA online

The collage shows various online platforms for the National Sheep Association. On the left, there are screenshots of the NSA Facebook page (showing 2,000 likes) and the NSA Twitter page (showing 875 followers). On the right, there are screenshots of the main NSA website, the NSA Next Generation website, the NSA Scotland website, and the NSA Scot Sheep website. The NSA website features a navigation menu and a news section. The NSA Next Generation website has a header with the NSA logo and a navigation menu. The NSA Scotland website has a header with the NSA logo and a navigation menu. The NSA Scot Sheep website has a header with the NSA logo and a navigation menu. The bottom of the collage features the NSA logo and the slogan "your business your future".

The NSA online offering is increasing all the time. In addition to the main NSA website (picture top right), NSA Next Generation, NSA Scottish Region and NSA Scot Sheep websites are now all linked together, improving navigation and the data we can collect about users. Data shows that around 40% of people who visit the main website via Google are searching for information about different sheep breeds and are unlikely to be farmers; this is something we are looking to cater for more in the future.

Social media interest is also increasing and this should be assumed to be a mix of farmers and non-farmers too. The NSA Facebook (top left) and Twitter (bottom left) pages are pictured.

NSA online



Growth has been steady for social media and while visits to the website are very strong (see graph) the monthly variation is considerable and needs further investigation.



The NSA Next Generation project is a huge success story for the last 12 months, bringing together under one umbrella all the positive things NSA does for young people in the sheep sector, such as regional, national, European and international young shepherd competitions and scholarships to conferences and events. The NSA Next Generation website was launched in October 2013 and the first ever Next Generation Ambassador Group created in January 2014. Pictures are from the first three of five delivery sessions planned for the Ambassadors through 2014. NSA intends to welcome applications for the 2015 Ambassador Group this autumn.

For more information about any NSA activity, please email enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk.