

**MINUTES OF THE NSA NORTHERN REGION ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING  
HELD ON THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2016  
at The Tynedale Function Suite, Hexham Mart, Hexham at 7.30pm.**

Chairman, Greg Dalton welcomed the large number of northern region members present to the AGM.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – T Dunn, R Mears, D Brotherton, C Durham, R Raine, D Raine, V Brown, M & B Coulthard, D Wilson, T Stoney, Mrs J Knowles.

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 25 February 2015** – The minutes of the last AGM held on 25 February had been circulated to all regional members within the Sheep Farmer magazine. Proposed as a true and correct record by A Watson, seconded by J Bell (n). Signed by Chairman, G Dalton.

**3. MATTERS ARISING** - None

**4. CHAIRMANS REPORT** - written by Greg Dalton

Since the last AGM there have been many issues we have had to face within the sheep industry. Not surprisingly, one of the major factors which have had a substantial impact throughout the year has been the weather. Although April was dry and reasonably warm, May was the opposite being very cold and wet. This climate seemed to carry on into June, thus restricting grass growth for sheep with young lambs, however remarkably, the majority of sheep seemed to thrive and do particularly well considering.

Although the weather did improve in July with more heat, hay and silage making was never easy and has resulted in some poor quality forage. Analysis has shown that the quality is poorer than in previous years however, late summer and early autumn brought dry warm weather which resulted in exceptional grass growth for many.

The sting in the tail came from mid-November onwards, with massive rainfall culminating in some of the worst flooding seen here in the northern region on record.

Over 500 North East farms were affected by the floods and in Cumbria there are over 650 farms that have sustained damage. Currently the total bill is likely to exceed 1.5 Million pounds, with tens of thousands of pounds due to loss of livestock. Huge areas of farmland remain waterlogged and unusable, and where floodwaters have receded, grazing has been devastated by washed-up silt and debris. Large areas of arable and winter feed crops have been destroyed, farm buildings and infrastructure wrecked, and left under water, at a time when farm businesses were already under severe pressure with depressed commodity prices. Although there is help being offered from some organisations, unfortunately it is ultimately the farmer that will bear the brunt of the cost.

Fat Lamb trade has largely been quite steady up to the New Year, however in the last few months we have seen an improvement in prices. My personal feeling is that this is largely due to a better exchange rate, as well as tightening of supply and increased consumption. We have also seen an increase in the promotion of British Lamb. Our hope is that AHDB will continue to listen to the industry and that they will begin to understand the need for promotion is vital. We also need to keep the pressure on retailers and ensure lamb is affordable to the consumer.

The trade of breeding sheep on the whole, has been better than expected. The averages of some hill breeds were surprisingly up on the previous year. This has indicated there is a definite shortage in numbers of female breeding sheep, which is a result of

Government policy and the removal of them from the hills and uplands.

At an English Committee meeting in August, the NSA Chief Executive Mr Phil Stocker briefly discussed attending the premier of the up and coming film 'Addicted to Sheep'. He was quite keen to meet The Hutchinson Family who starred in the film and visit parts of our Northern Region, to gain a better perspective of farming life in the hills and uplands. Mr Stocker visited us on the last weekend in September, where he attended St John's Chapel Draft Ewe Sale and Langdon Beck Sheep Show, as well as meeting many farmers and discussing the sheep industry with them. I hope the visit proved fruitful and helped him understand the many complex issues we face as upland and hill farmer. We extend a warm welcome for any future visits to our region.

To end, I want to highlight the massive success of our Northern Region bi-annual event! North Sheep 2015 was held at Millstone Moor farm by kind permission of the Marston family. I think I can speak for all of the regional committee when I say it was a great pleasure working with Neil, Sally and their friends and family. As a committee you all worked tirelessly to ensure the event was the best one yet. We had record attendance at the event and we successfully increased NSA membership. I cannot Thank you all enough for the fantastic job you did, not only in the run up to the event, but also on the actual day, ensuring everything ran as smoothly as possible. As Natalie and I circulated around the event it was clear to

see from the comments and feedback, everyone thoroughly enjoyed their day. Many highlighted the fact that the committee worked exceptionally hard and conducted themselves very professionally, in order to ensure their needs were met to the best of their ability. My personal opinion is that events like this are paramount to the industry, for the first time ever we had local TV stations broadcasting from the event and it is hoped there will be an increased awareness of our organisation and the sheep industry in general.

Finally I want to take this opportunity to thank Julie for all her hard work, not only at North Sheep 2015, but for her commitment and dedication to the NSA Northern Region over the past 27 years. She has been a major inspiration to others, turning North Sheep from its humble beginnings, to the massive event it is today. In terms of her role as regional manager, she has not only promoted the industry tirelessly, she lives and breathes the industry and has proved a great ambassador for the NSA on a whole. Julie has been actively involved in the organising of many other events such as Scot Sheep and NSA National Events at Malvern. She will be a great miss to us all; however she will no doubt continue to support us by attending our future events. As we are all aware, Julie's replacement is Heather Stoney-Grayshon and although she has a hard act to follow, I'm sure she will endeavor to build on the success that has already been achieved. I have no doubt Heather will relish the challenges ahead and fulfil the role to the best of her ability.

I must thank all of those who have helped me during my first year as chairman, especially Julie, the committee and my wife Natalie, who has turned out to be a pretty good secretary in her own right.

**5. FINANCIAL STATEMENT** – Treasurer, E Eastham gave a report on the northern region's finances for 2015, copies were circulated to those present. NSA North Sheep 2015 had been held in June, income was up but costs were also up, need to keep a check on expenses, but a profit of £15,669 had been made. There were no questions. Proposed to accept by A Alderson, seconded by J Reed.

## **6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**a) Chairman** – J Reed nominated, Seconded by A Watson the re-election of Greg Dalton.

**b) Vice-Chairman** – J Bell nominated, seconded by C Stephenson the re-election of Eddie Eastham.

**c) Treasurer** – A Watson proposed Eddie Eastham to continue as regional Treasurer, seconded by A Alderson

**d) Regional Trustee** – Adam Watson stated that he was unable to continue as the regions Trustee to the NSA Board due to work commitments, so it was proposed by G Lawn and seconded by J Barnes that John Geldard be elected to take his place on the NSA Board as a regional Trustee.

**e) Representative to NSA English Committee** – C Stephenson proposed and J Reed seconded the proposal of Thomas Carrick to become the region's representative on the English Committee.

**7. PRESENTATION OF THE ALLINSON MEMORIAL AWARD 2016** – John Reed read out a citation as follows – “It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the entire northern region committee of NSA to nominate our retiring regional manager Julie Sedgewick” Greg Dalton presented Julie with an engraved crystal rose bowl. Julie thanked all of the committee present for being so supportive over the last 27 years.

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS** – Chairman, Greg Dalton introduced Heather Stoney Grayshon to the members as the new NSA northern regional manager who would take up her new role on 1 March 2016.

A presentation was then made to Julie Sedgewick who had been the NSA northern region manager since 1989. She was presented with a Teesdale crystal tablet engraved with a north of England Mule ewe and Durham Cathedral. Jean Wilson, on behalf of the Herdwick SBA presented Julie with a bouquet of flowers to thank her for the assistance given to the breed society at regional events.

After the AGM an open meeting was held with the following speakers: Steve Dunkley, Senior Regional Manager – North East AHDB Beef and Lamb, Thomas Carrick the NSA northern region ambassador for 2015 and Phil Stocker, NSA CEO who gave an update on the political situation within the sheep industry.

Meeting closed at 945pm, tea, coffee and biscuits were served.