



**MINUTES OF NSA CYMRU WALES REGION ANNUAL REGIONAL MEMBERS MEETING HELD
AT HAFOD Y HENDRE, ROYAL WELSH SHOWGROUND ON WEDNESDAY
20th FEBRUARY 2020.**

Chairman Tim Ward

Present

Kate Hovers	John Morris	Bleddyn Davies
Claire Jesse	Anne Groucott	David Pittendreigh
Chris Jesse	Linda Davies	Will Hughes
Hywel Morgan	Tanya Rogers	Llew Thomas
Sarah Carr	Delyth Williams	Arthur George
Bryn Hughes	Gwenan Arch	Liz Price
Andrew Edwards	Nicola Drew	Huw Alun Evans
Gwynne Davies	Catherine Nakielny	Gaina Morgan
Denis Matheson	Tim Tyne	Roger Davies
Caryl Hughes	Owen Roberts (HCC)	Laura Johnson (BW)

In Attendance: Helen Roberts, Mr Phil Stocker

1. Apologies Margaret Dalton, John Lloyd, Alun Davies, Lorraine Howells, Paul Wozencraft, Dan Downes, Andrew Jones, Erinna Rogers, Mary Gittins, Jane Smith.

2. To Confirm the Minutes of last AGM held 20th February 2019. - The minutes were confirmed by all those present.

3. To consider matters arising from the above. No Matters arising

4. Chairman's Report from Tim Ward - It hardly seems two years since I took over from Llew Thomas as Chairman. Then, as now the main topic of concern was Brexit. With the outcome of the recent election the situation is somewhat clearer, but the future is still uncertain. It is important that all agencies work together to secure the best trading opportunities with both with Europe and the rest of the world. With the ever-changing marketplace we must be prepared to change and take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself to the industry.

One of the highlights of my term in office was the sheep event we held at Glynllifon College. It was the first time the event was held on a college campus and I am sure you will agree it was a great venue for the event. It is not a small job to put on such an event and my thanks must go to all those who were involved in making the event such a success.

Whilst Brexit has taken a lot of time over the last two years NSA Cymru/Wales has continued to work on a number of fronts such as sheep scab, sheep identification, Quarantine Units, TSE regulations, Heritage breeds and so much more.

The region has continued to support the NSA Next Generation programme which has proved invaluable in supporting the next generation of sheep farmers.

With the constant "bashing" of agriculture both by the "climate brigade" and the non-meat eaters, we must remain positive and continue to promote the benefits that the sheep industry has.

Phil Stocker recorded his thanks to Tim for the last two years as Chair of the Region.

5. To review the accounts for 2019.

In the report it had shown the figures from NSA Welsh Sheep 2017 which was a mistake. The accounts now presented at the meeting showed the last three years and this gave a better comparison of how the Region functions. The secretary/treasurer presented the accounts and reported that the accounts showed a healthy balance of £21,552 in the current account, £45,196 deposit account at the bank and £139,747 invested in COIF this was up on the year. Sponsorship of the Royal Welsh and Winter Fair continued plus the sponsorship of Harper Cymru. Committee expenses covers the £800 paid to Malvern for NSA Cymru members to attend meetings etc. The overall net profit for the year was £59,763. NSA Welsh Sheep had an income of £94,838 down £9,753 on the previous event and expenditure of £44,652 down £13,698 due to been able to use the college facilities for the seminars, no wet weather expenses or washing down and farm expenses. The accounts were approved by those present.

6. To appoint Officers for the coming year.

- a) Chairman – Tim Ward proposed Kate Hovers agreed by those present.
- b) Vice Chairman – Helen Roberts proposed Caryl Hughes, Llew Thomas seconded and agreed by those present.
- c) Treasurer - Helen Roberts was proposed by those present with Tim Ward proposed as Vice Treasurer.
- d) Secretary/Regional manager - Helen Roberts was proposed by those present.
- e) Committee Names of the committee were read out. It was agreed to keep the current members on committee and to remind Breed Societies to nominate representatives and inform the secretary of any changes.
- f) To confirm nominations to NSA Board for 2020.
Nominations for Board were Tim Ward, Llew Thomas and Kate Hovers. Paul Wozencraft stepped down having been a Board Member for the last 6 years.
Policy & Technical committee John Lloyd
F& GP committee Margaret Dalton.
These nominations were accepted by those present.

7. Secretary's Remuneration. The annual amount would remain at £6,000 per year plus expenses and travel at 45ppm. This agreed by those present.

8. To consider any other business. The date and venue for NSA Welsh Sheep was announced 18th May 2021 at Red House, Aberhafesp, Newtown by kind permission of the Owen family. An update on the Sheep Scab programme was requested. A bid had gone in for RDP funding from Gelli Aur but nothing had been reported back, which NSA and those present found frustrating as the Minister Lesley Griffiths had announced a 5 million pot to help eradicate the problem in the previous year. However, we were still waiting for answers.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 11.30am and thanked those for attending.

The meeting was followed by talks from the following people.

Sheep Farming has a Positive Impact on Environment

New NSA Wales/Cymru Chair, Brecon vet and sheep farmer Kate Hovers, set the tone for the Annual Regional Members Meeting. She urged a renewed emphasis on cutting food waste rather than 'farmer bashing'. Kate Hovers BVSC Cert SHP MRCVS told the meeting at the Royal Welsh Showground that it was important to think about journeys, transport and food waste. She said nearly a third of food was wasted between the point of production and the table – with nearly 70% of that in the home. She said: "Things like bread and salad are higher up on the waste, but whatever it is we can all make changes and think about how to reduce waste and how many times to make a journey in a car with one person in it.

"Then we can enjoy seeing our sheep in a natural environment where the grass may be locking in carbon and certainly helping to stop the water running down the hillside."

The comments reflected unease at the meeting over increased criticism of sheep farmers. Outgoing Chairman, Tim Ward, worried about proposed plans to plant more trees in the uplands under payment for public goods.

NSA Development Officer Helen Roberts voiced concern over criticism of the sheep industry by the anti-farming lobby and, in some quarters, during the unprecedented flooding. She said the meeting would demonstrate how the National Sheep Association was working to show that sheep farming is a sustainable, resilient industry.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker told the meeting of the 'strong story' the industry had to tell. He criticised the general 'anti farming climate', saying that sheep farming is a sustainable industry supporting rural economies and social infrastructure.

He quoted IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) figures that gave context to claims that methane produced by livestock is contributing to climate change. And he called for the IPCC to take account of the new carbon metrics coming from the GWP* model (Global Warming Potential) as developed by Oxford University earlier this year.

This work shows that methane has a relatively short life cycle and contributes far less to climate change than previous figures suggested. It demonstrates the beneficial effect of grazing livestock, especially in the uplands of which 80% of Wales is made up, against the effect of fossil fuel dependant forms of farming and food production.

Phil Stocker added: "Here in Wales, as with much of the UK, our approach to red meat production is so different to that in other parts of the world.

"Here our sheep spend most of their lives outdoors feeding on grass and forage crops, with a positive relationship with nature and involved in a carbon cycle that has been going on for thousands of years. We have been demonised by the media as being environmentally damaging and the watching public have understandably taken a lot of this on board.

"As an industry, too much time has been spent on defending with our backs to the wall rather than being out there proactively and accurately communicating the reality of grassland livestock farming. We can't be complacent, and we should always think of where we can do more, and do better, but we have a fantastic story to tell and the NSA will continue to tell it."

Hybu Cig Cymru/Meat Promotion Wales figures also displayed the strong story of non-intensive agriculture. Communications Manager, Owen Roberts, showed a video featuring new NSA Wales/Cymru vice chair and former NSA Young Ambassador, Caryl Hughes, as part of a £250,000 advertising campaign to promote PGI Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef.

The multimedia campaign focuses on Welsh red meat's sustainable qualities. It features core messages around Wales' sustainable red meat production focusing on elements such as landscape, climate and water usage. Caryl farms in the dramatic landscape of the Ceiriog valley, near Llangollen. She was the first person to win the Llyndy Isaf Scholarship with the National Trust – where she managed a Snowdonia hill farm for a year, combining sustainable farming practices with managing the outstanding natural environment. Caryl has a degree in Agriculture from Aberystwyth University, she is a former National Sheep Association Young Ambassador and Montgomery YFC Chair.

British Wool's Laura Johnson pressed home the importance of animal welfare at shearing time. She said this is a key part of their shearing training programme, offered to complete beginners and advanced shearers.

British Wool have also been working tirelessly to educate consumers on farming matters through their #ChampionWool campaign. It reaches across all their social media channels.

The meeting was marked by the age and gender balance. A good turnout was distinguished by an equal spread of older, younger and men and women sheep farmers.

Speakers also included another Young Ambassador, Nicola Drew, who trained and worked in theatre and dance before returning to her home farm near Brecon. She told how Farming Connect and other courses had helped to equip her with the necessary knowledge.

Her presentation featured her two projects, working with local Honddu Vets, to reduce worms and reduce production limiting disease on the farm. Nicola had worked hard to tackle OPA, reducing mortality among ewes from 5%, to 3.5% in 2017 and to 2% in 2018 against the background of increasing flock numbers year on year.

Innovation at the other end of the production chain was outlined by Claire Jesse, who produces Lamb Bacon at her Welsh Smokery in Tregaron. She told how her experience running Sussex body piercing business had helped.

Claire said: "Weirdly setting up a food unit and setting up a piercing studio actually have a lot of similarities in terms of the cross contamination side of things and the food safety side of things. It also means that tagging a sheep is quite easy."

She explained that the lamb bacon is cured and produced in the same way as bacon produced from pigs. The Welsh Smokery worked closely with the abattoir in Tregaron, using the saddle from other lambs as well as from the few lambs she produces.

Her mission is to establish that lamb for breakfast is a modern alternative to meat and two vegetables.