

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to present this first Chair's report to Lucky Ewe's AGM. It will briefly consider the main activities we have undertaken in starting up this new charity, covering the following topics: our application for Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) registration, our membership, the efforts we have made to gain an asset transfer of land at Stratheden, fundraising and finance, who our beneficiaries and partners are, our consultation and online survey activities, publicity and the work of recently appointed employees. Lastly, the fantastic effort put in by volunteers, trustees and other supporters will also be acknowledged.

SCIO Registration:

The original plan was to establish Lucky Ewe as a 'branch' of Sustainable Cupar, but that format would have had drawbacks and put a limit on funding opportunities. For example, if Sustainable Cupar received a grant from a funder, it might be 3 years before that funder would accept an application from Lucky Ewe. SCIO status was decided upon because, with its 2 tier membership, it is an acceptable legal status to become a community asset recipient. SCIOs can own community assets, and Lucky Ewe might in future want to own the land at Stratheden, so this status makes us 'future proof'. Lucky Ewe applied in 2019 and then engaged in investigative correspondence with OSCR who needed to make sure we 'passed the charity test' (being entirely for public benefit). Lucky Ewe's SCIO was registered on March 13th 2020. 10 days later we were in 'lock down'!

Membership:

The inaugural meeting of Lucky Ewe was attended by friends, family, former work colleagues and members of Sustainable Cupar – 15 people in all. They were happy to join up and took membership forms away with them and soon Lucky Ewe membership reached 28. Now at 34, the membership includes employees, active volunteers, Kilmaron School as an associate member, as well as a wide cross-section of supporters. There is no membership fee and we ask everyone to encourage people in their acquaintance to find out about Lucky Ewe, and to join us if they want to see Lucky Ewe flourish. We are aiming for diversity and strength in numbers since these will give our charity resilience going forward.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Request:

The original plan was to seek only the small grazing paddocks, the derelict morgue and its surrounding field for our community micro-dairy project. But on reflection, trustees decided to look to the future and aim to create a good sized small-holding where diverse farming and land management activities to support biodiversity can be accomplished. So, we agreed to seek the asset transfer of all 26 ha (65 acres) of agricultural land at Stratheden on a 25 year lease. One of the main strengths of our request is that it will bring all this publicly owned land back into use for public benefit and end its being subsumed into a private business enterprise. The long lease will reassure funders that their investment will have long term benefits

Lucky Ewe CAT request emphasises the central accessible location of Stratheden and its proximity to CAMHS service for young people with mental health issues. SRUC Elmwood is nearby too, and Lucky Ewe can support some learners by giving them the necessary experience to get them ready for land management and animal care courses. The CAT request also sets out how leasing the land to Lucky

Ewe will help Fife Health and Social Care Partnership meet some of the targets within their strategic development plan. Another important strand is the strong letters of support we have obtained from Skills Development Scotland, Local Councillors and MSP amongst others, and submitted alongside our request. It took a lot of time and effort to put it all together, and the request was lodged with NHS Fife on October 5th 2020. However, 4 months later, our CAT request has still to be validated (the first step in the process), and is currently languishing in NHS Fife's legal team's inbox.

Fund-raising and Finance:

In 2019 Lucky Ewe engaged the fund raising services of Marcscott Consulting, knowing they had done a great job in raising funds for Options in Life amongst other local charities. So far, Marcscott has secured the main part of our funding, allowing Lucky Ewe recently to fill part time education officer posts (12 hours per week) and administration posts (4 hours per week). In addition, Lucky Ewe Trustees successfully bid for a portion of the Douglas Bader Garden residual monies. £21k has been ear-marked by Fife Council, and we will draw it down from them when we are ready to meet the setting up costs at new premises. Trustees also successfully applied for smaller donations from retailers, and private individuals have also generously supported us, all noted in the Treasurer's Report.

The crucial point about successful fund raising is the development and maintenance of the clarity of our charitable purposes. If we can describe exactly what we plan to use grants for, and this chimes in with the funder's aims, then there's a chance of receiving a grant. So, going forward, Trustees will be developing this clarity of purpose, while still remaining open to our local partners' aims and aspirations. Secondly, the monitoring and reporting of activities is a keystone of financial success. So, systems of collecting feedback from Lucky Ewe beneficiaries and partners, showing that we are meeting our aims, and reporting these successes to funders is a significant work in progress.

Beneficiaries and Partners:

Because of Trustees' strong links to a local secondary school we have built a core group of secondary pupils following an alternative curriculum, and these volunteer-workers come along twice per week. They are fruitfully pursuing Princes Trust and SQA work experience qualifications. However, school based learners are only one of our target groups. We are in discussion with 16+, Cupar Youth Café and Apex where some of our potential beneficiaries have been identified. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have also registered interest for some of their clients. Trustees have approached East Fife Riding for the Disabled and Options in Life to publicise our service amongst their members as our potential beneficiaries.

It is true to say that developing our beneficiary base – getting to know and understand the groups and individuals that Lucky Ewe will serve – will be our main focus in the coming months. Working with partners to develop strong local links depends on careful preparation of the ground in advance of activities. Trustees are confident that the current hiatus occasioned by Covid regulations will give us time and prove to be a positive force in helping us to strengthen our charity's foundations.

Consultation and survey:

Towards the end of 2019, Trustees put together a questionnaire where partners could register their views on our planned project. It described an ideal day at Lucky Ewe and then asked for feedback,

and whether they or their clients might become involved. There was plenty of space for free commentary. 16 questionnaires were returned during 2020 and the views expressed in them have helped to shape our plans.

A more general survey of public views of Lucky Ewe's aims and objectives is active on our website www.luckyewe.org.uk at the moment. Last time I looked there were 59 full responses, and 30 of those respondents had left their email address, seeking to be kept informed of our progress. These consultative activities help to keep Lucky Ewe responsive to community need and this also helps make the case for community asset transfer.

Publicity; films, poster, website, Facebook

Our first short film was created by Napier University overseas business students in early 2020 as part of their Master's degree course. It was a great wee film and the process challenged the trustees to think more deeply about how to present our charity. So, when Business Gateway offered to fund (except for VAT) a professionally created short film we jumped at the chance. The 2 minute film scripted and created by MBP productions, pops up first on the Lucky Ewe website and precedes the link to the survey. It features beneficiaries, trustees, half grown lambs, hens and a robin all in the beautiful landscape at Bonnyton. What more could you want?

The poster was produced by our administrator to publicise fund raising by the Coop community fund on our behalf. We have displayed the poster in all local Coops and members can choose to support Lucky Ewe and thereby help us accrue funding till October 2021.

Lucky Ewe website took some time and a lot of discussion to create. But with the pro bono services of Plan B Web Design it was launched in November 2020. We have decided to upload all our minutes so that that any inquisitive person can read the details of our genesis. Our bank information is up there too, so that generous people will find it easy to make donations. We have had 106 visitors to the website in the last month and 28 are 'new users'. Currently we are aiming to upload a weekly video to keep everyone, especially beneficiaries, informed of what is going on at the farm in the run-up to lambing in April.

Lucky Ewe Facebook page provides a good opportunity for promoting Lucky Ewe activities and proved invaluable in during our recruitment period in the autumn, directing top quality job applicants to us. Page activity in the past year has accelerated, from 86 followers (people who have liked and selected to 'follow' the page ie Lucky Ewe Facebook friends) to 116 in October, and currently there are 193. Recent photos and video updates provided by Lucky Ewe staff and volunteers have been well liked (a recent video had 329 viewings). This is very positive and demonstrates that there is a genuine interest in Lucky Ewe activities and by continuing to update the page with current information we have the opportunity to continue to raise awareness in the community.

Employees:

Following a careful recruitment procedure last year, we have appointed 2 part time education officers, Jenny and Jen, as well as 2 part time administrators Alyssa and Isha, who started to work for Lucky Ewe at the turn of the year. The administrators got the pay-roll started, helped develop our policies and procedures for working with volunteers, whereas the education officers mainly work

directly with beneficiaries. A typical day for them consists of assisting everyone with putting on PPE needed for working on a muddy farm and having a good chat about what the activities might be. There is support and discussion for beneficiaries about what they would like to do and what would suit their abilities/interests.

These might include sheep feeding including freshening hay and water, with some discussion as to why this is important for the sheep; checking of general health of the animals, perhaps weighing or dosing them with any required medicines; mucking out of the poly-tunnel which can be a very physical job. Some general farm jobs might include planting of trees, pruning and maintenance of new plants and mulching, which has been an important job this winter. Working together allows for great conversation, enjoying the company of others and of course that of the sheep! Tasks on the farm are fun and tailored to suit the needs/abilities of workers at Lucky Ewe.

It is clear that the workers enjoy their visits to Lucky Ewe. Some even suggested working in a farm environment would be a future career they would consider. Through repeated visits it has been easy to see their confidence growing in relation to sheep care and general farm work. Workers are learning the feeding routine, for example, whilst also gaining an understanding of the nutritional needs of the animals and thus, the reasons behind our daily tasks. The atmosphere within the group is always encouraging, relaxed and positive, allowing everyone to enjoy the work, being able to laugh together whilst maintaining a 'workplace' environment. The small working groups allows for plenty to do for every worker and the opportunity to get to know one another, building a safe, supportive and trusting environment.

Acknowledgements and thanks:

Many thanks and acknowledgments are due to all the individuals who have helped during Lucky Ewe's start-up phase. Christine MacDowel has been a fantastic trustee! Always relied on for her sensible outlook, her generous gifts of time, hospitality and constructive advice, Christine will be sadly missed by the remaining trustees as she stands down for personal reasons.

Pete and Susan Beaver and their family are consistently excellent supporter of Lucky Ewe and have helped us out in so many practical ways since we moved to Bonnyton Farm in October 2019. Ali McLean and son Ben, Morwyn Potter and Amanda Fawzie have all generously given grazing to Lucky Ewe when grass has been in short supply.

Simon Howell has created and hosts our website and we are very grateful for this top quality freely given service. Lorna Hirst kindly keeps our Facebook page lively and bright. Graham Dawson has set up our essential on farm safety management and reporting system and also receives our grateful thanks.

We have had help and advice from public services such as Fife Voluntary Action, Community Ownership Support Service and Fife Business Gateway amongst others.

However the most important thanks and acknowledgements go to our members – our Trustees (Mary, Jill, Alana, Christine and Joan) who have worked hard to get Lucky Ewe this far, our active volunteers (Richard, Heather, Trish, Graham, Stuart, Mary Ellen, Pete and Susan) and our generous

supporters (Norma, Hugh and Rhona, Ian and Victoria, Christine and Ian, Mary, Isobel and Diane). There will be somebody missing from this list and I apologise unreservedly for that omission.

In conclusion:

As well as looking back over the last 18 months, this report has highlighted the 'to do list' for Lucky Ewe going forward. It reads as follows:

- Concentrate on the work in hand and put our CAT request to the back of our minds
- Increase and diversify our membership of active volunteers and supporters
- Discuss and develop our vision and charitable purposes with our members and friends
- Devise systems for checking how well we are doing and keep our funders informed
- Make sure our policies are fit for purpose
- Grow our beneficiary base in conjunction with partners
- Continue to inform the community and consult locally on our aims and objectives
- Refine and grow our farming skills portfolio to increase and vary the opportunities we offer

Dr Joan Brown Chair 16th February 2021