

Lucky Ewe Chair's Report for AGM at 7pm on Monday 25/03/2024 at OPC Short Lane Cupar

Lucky Ewe has had a very full year with 46 interns benefiting from placements on the farm. At present, 17 adult volunteers give on-farm support, while our 8 trustees are helped by many other friends and supporters. This year we have handed out 27 Saltire Awards for those in the 12 – 25 age group making a substantial regular volunteering contribution, and 8 more certificates will go to our current CAMHS volunteers. Our membership increased from 69 and is now standing at 92 individuals, with 5 associate members, Howe of Fife Rotary, Sustainable Cupar, Windward Education, Bell Baxter High School and Kilmaron School. We have 871 Facebook followers, 1,978 followers on Instagram and 726 on TikTok. Lucky Ewe continues to receive generous core funding from the National Lottery, Robertson Trust and Fife Voluntary Action amongst others. We are very grateful to all our funders and especially for private donations from our supporters. Over the winter we have delivered our second SCQF4 in Rural Skills and helped 7 more young people (17 now in total) transition into further education and training.

This year, Lucky Ewe has received recognition from Dr Alex George, the UK Mental Health Ambassador within the Department of Education, and from Rishi Sunak, the Prime Minister, making Lucky Ewe a Point of Light, for the charitable work we do. Treasurer, Jill Dawson was honoured as a Coronation Champion last summer and led a wee posse of scrubbed-up Trustees to Holyrood Garden Party where Alana, Libby and Abby met Queen Camilla and First Minister, Humza Yousaf. Our relationship with elected representative continues on a very positive footing and Trustees have taken advice and support from Wendy Chamberlain and Willie Rennie this year. The Scottish Government has since asked Lucky Ewe to host a workshop at their Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing In Our Communities: Emerging Practice event. This was to share our journey and good practice with Councils and Charities across Scotland. We could not be prouder of our former interns, staff, volunteers and trustees who worked on the presentation and delivered it so well.

Staffing has been rejuvenated this year with Craig Holmes, in the Farm Operations post since September, leading the team; Gillian Smith, working with Interns and their families in Support and Development; and Kerry Nimmo providing Administrative Support. So, we have had to say goodbye to Colin Marshall who left after lambing last year, to seek new pastures on his croft in Skye, with his wife, and previous trustee, Claudia. They take our best wishes with them. Franki Campbell and Caroline Weinberger have also left the employed team, though we are very grateful that both continue as Lucky Ewe volunteers. Alyssa Gowans has moved on after 3 years as our founding Administrator. Alyssa set up all our systems and, crucially, created the payroll system, dealing with everything to do with HMRC and pensions. Alyssa also receives our grateful thanks, and we wish her all the very best in her future career. The Trustee group has also received an injection of youth and vigour this year. Hazel Fletcher, joined as a farm volunteer after leaving a Senior Post in Market Research in London. Hazel is loving the outdoor work on farm, and has progressed to Trusteeship. Another new Trustee is Susan Usher who has been coming to Lucky Ewe with her CAMHS group and helping at all our events for years. So we offer a big Lucky Ewe welcome to our new blood.

In early summer we took delivery of the Hisun 450 utility vehicle, funded by Fife Voluntary Action and Foundation Scotland, and Meldrum's the supplier have included lifelong free servicing. We have enjoyed finding many uses for it on the smallholding – transporting equipment, feed and people. Staff and regular volunteers have been trained in its use, via Tayforth Machinery Ring, and are now able to help others learn how to operate the UTV safely. It is a valuable addition to our potential for skills training. During the snowy weather it became our 'Uber', bringing Interns from the track end

up to Bonnyton Farm steading. Tayforth also delivered First Aid training to 2 staff members, bringing Lucky Ewe's Health and Safety profile up to standard. In January, our Christmas meal was the venue for in-house Staff and Volunteer Training, and sessions in Mental Health Support (delivered by Joan and Susan), Zoonotic Diseases (by Gillian) and Rare Breed Livestock (by Hazel and Craig) gave the 18 volunteers attending the chance to increase their knowledge and reflect on their input to Lucky Ewe. Each was presented with their choice of a pair of luxury waterproof or leather work gloves.

The new (to us) milking parlour was complex to install and commission. However, we got there in the end, learned to operate it and produced a quantity of milk to raise funds from cheese sales. The sheep got the hang of running up the ramp and our Interns enjoyed moving the ewes from the holding pen, feeding them during milking and putting the clusters on. Across the board, Interns reported enjoying working closely with the sheep best. The close and caring relationship between the human farmer and domestic livestock is the unique selling point of Lucky Ewe. It is an ancient relationship, dating back millennia, and working in an animal husbandry environment helps to calm and focus our participants, allowing them to achieve their potential.

The on-farm staff, Craig and Gillian, are working hard to grow and develop Lucky Ewe's network of onward transitions and progressions for our Interns. Fife Zoo has been the most recent local business to welcome an Intern. The young person is thoroughly enjoying the experience of working with exotic animals and will benefit immensely from this when taking up his place on NC Animal Care at SRUC in the autumn. Places at St Andrews Aquarium are also in development, and our neighbouring estate, Teasses, is providing work experience with their cattle. These expansions have required due diligence by Trustees and Employees to assess risk and to make sure our insurance is 100% compatible. This network of onward progression will be an area of growth for Lucky Ewe and we plan to develop another four onward progression placements during the course of this year.

Funding and Fundraising have been going well for Lucky Ewe and as the Treasurer's Report will show. The Christmas Market and potato sales brought in around £1000. Lamb sales also brought in around £1000. These monies can go towards bolstering our reserves, which grant funders often do not allow. Lucky Ewe Trustees are keen to achieve the stability for the charity afforded by a commensurate reserves fund. That would mean 3 – 6 months running costs in the bank. So, we are covering our day-to-day salary and farm outgoings, starting to build reserves, and have collected £44,000 this year towards the cost of setting up in our new premises.

The mention of 'new premises' brings this report to the only substantial barrier to success currently being experienced by Lucky Ewe, namely, no lease from NHS Fife has yet been offered. People ask me 'why?' but I cannot explain or, indeed, understand why NHS Fife is continuing in its wholly negative stance towards Lucky Ewe's successful Community Asset Transfer request, when our charity is doing so much valuable and enjoyable work with and for their patients. NHS Fife has, unfortunately, continued in its last ditch intransigence for over a year now (last ditch because the appeal was upheld and our right to the land was all finally ratified in January 2023). NHS Fife astonishingly persists in disallowing any access for any vehicle across their campus, nor will they allow Lucky Ewe to make connection to water or electricity supplies on their campus. Moreover, NHS refuse to offer a lease until we give them full details of how we are going to afford and build a new road. As is well known, funders require a signed lease before they will consider releasing grants

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for feasibility and planning, as well as construction costs. So, it seems NHS's aim is not to comply with Community Empowerment legislation and to continue to block our rightful asset transfer.

Meanwhile, we have received a Notice to Quit our current premises on 31st of May 2024. All lambs will be born by then, so agriculturally it is an appropriate point in the year to move the flock, but we need fences and water in place at our new premises. We are prohibited from undertaking any improvements, or sowing grass seed for animal nutrition, till the lease is signed. Last year, as you know, Lucky Ewe members passed a motion, unanimously, to go ahead and take up the lease of land at Stratheden, under the Community Asset Transfer legislation. This year, I will be asking members to consider a motion at the AGM to the effect that we offer to install our own water and electricity supplies within 1 year of taking up the lease; that we will create a rough access route from the top road, and then seek funding to build the access route; we will meet any further requirements of NHS Fife, on the understanding that they will sign the 25 year lease with an entry date of 1st May 2024.

In conclusion, the past year has been full of valuable work to help people with additional support needs gain the skills and confidence they need to help them transition to their next step. Volunteers and employees have continued to work together to create a service that really is about filling a gap in society and helping prevent people falling through the cracks. I give thanks to all volunteers, staff and supporters for their energy and creativity – these are helping Lucky Ewe achieve its aims. Looking forward, we all realise that there is plenty of work coming up and I am very glad and proud to have such an able and willing team to tackle it. I ask all members and friends to give yourselves a big pat on the back to acknowledge your contribution and a high five for all your efforts. Thank you.

Dr Joan Brown, 17/03/2024