Issue No. 13

FCN THE FARMING COMMUNITY NETWORK

Summer 2023

Here for you

BUILDING ON OUR FOUNDER'S LEGACY

Jude McCann, FCN CEO

We write this edition of our newsletter with much to celebrate, though also with a profound sadness for the loss of our Founder and Honorary President, Christopher Jones, who passed away in May.

Christopher was a visionary committed to supporting and 'walking with' those in need in our farming community. His wisdom, kindness and enduring support for the farming community not only led to the creation of FCN in 1995, but has remained a guiding force behind the charity since its inception. Christopher's legacy lives on through the countless farmers and farming families who have benefited from his work and the ongoing work of the charity. He will be missed by all who knew him.

As we look to the future, we are reminded of Christopher's incredible achievement through the positive reputation of the charity and all those who wish to work with and support us today. FCN continues to grow, and there is increasing awareness of the support and services we provide the farming community. Through our dedicated volunteer and staff team we provide vital support to people in agriculture, allied industries and rural communities, helping them find a positive way forward through any issues they may be facing.

In our summer newsletter we have featured just a small selection of the fantastic developments taking place within the charity – sadly there aren't enough pages to include everything, but we hope you will enjoy reading about some of the highlights. We would like to thank everyone for your ongoing support for the work of FCN, helping us to create a healthy and resilient future for farming now and in the years to come.

- Dr Jude McCann, Chief Executive Officer, The Farming Community Network

For the latest news about all things FCN, continue reading...

REMEMBERING OUR FOUNDER, CHRISTOPHER JONES

Tributes from across the farming community have been made to Christopher Jones MBE, FCN's Founder and Honorary President, who passed away on Sunday 14th May aged 81. Those who knew him have spoken of his compassion, leadership, friendship, commitment, humour and faith.

Christopher founded FCN in 1995, from the middle-bedroom of the farmhouse in West Haddon, Northamptonshire. This was a joint venture between the Agricultural Christian Fellowship (ACF) and Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre. The charity was founded under the name The Farm Crisis Network. In 2013, The Farm Crisis Network changed its name to The Farming Community Network. Today the charity supports over 6,000 farmers and farming families each year with a variety of issues.

We have set up a tribute page to Christopher on the FCN website: fcn.org.uk/memories-of-christopher-jones-mbe If you would like to write a tribute or share any memories of Christopher please email them to help@fcn.org.uk

CORONATION CELEBRATIONS

In May FCN was invited to attend a couple of Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. On Wednesday 3 May FCN volunteers Josie Baxter and Sally Prewett, and staff members Georgina Lamb and Linda Jones, represented FCN on this special occasion. Following this, FCN volunteer Eva Featherston joined our Chief Executive Officer Jude McCann on Tuesday 9 May at a separate Coronation event.

STUDY SEEKS FARMERS' FEEDBACK ON IMPACT OF BOVINE TB

New research by FCN seeks to better understand the impact of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) on UK farmers' health and wellbeing. The study explores the emotional, financial and physical impacts of bTB and the long-term ramifications these may have had on the farm family or farm business. A short survey is being circulated as part of the study and will be live until August. Farmers who have experienced a bTB breakdown are being encouraged to fill the survey in and to share their experiences. Find out more via the FCN website: fcn.org.uk/research

HUNDREDS OF WOOLY HATS GIFTED TO FARMERS

Hundreds of woolly hats have been gifted to farmers across Wales and England as part of FCN and British Wool's 'Wool and Wellness' campaign. The campaign encourages members of the public and the farming community to take up the challenge of knitting a hat using wool, stitching in an FCN Helpline label (03000 111 999) – and then gifting it to another person.

The campaign is helping to raise awareness of the importance of good mental health in farming, encouraging people to keep the FCN Helpline number close by in case they need to talk to someone who understands farming life about any pressures, worries or concerns they may be having. Find out more: fcn.org.uk/wool-and-wellness

WALES FARM SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS CHAMPIONING COLLABORATION

In late 2022 FCN coordinated a series of events attended by members of the Wales Farm Support Group to discuss closer ways the charities can work together in support of the farming community, whilst also developing the FarmWell Wales platform. Events took place at Carmarthen Mart and Eagles Hotel, Llanwrst, with speakers including FCN, The DPJ Foundation, Tir Dewi, Farming Connect, RABI, Monmouthshire Rural Support Centre and the Farm Liaison Service. More information about FarmWell Wales can be found here: farmwell.wales

NFU CONFERENCE SUPPORTING WORK OF FCN

FCN was the chosen charity at this year's NFU Conference in February. It was a fantastic two days attended by FCN volunteers and staff, and the industry heard from leading voices in agriculture. We feel privileged to have been part of the event and would like to thank NFU President Minette Batters and the whole NFU team for their kind words of support for the work of FCN. The funds raised for FCN during the Conference as chosen charity this year has been truly remarkable, and we are blown away by everyone's generosity.

THE SUN SHINES THIS SUMMER ON AGRICULTURAL SHOWS AND EVENTS

Thanks to the efforts of our volunteers and staff, FCN continues to have a fantastic show presence this year. We look forward to attending a large variety of shows over the coming months. You can access a list of shows we usually attend here: fcn.org.uk/where-to-find-fcn

If you're attending any of these shows, please stop by our stand and say hello to our team!

YARN IN A BARN EVENTS

Hundreds of people from farming and rural communities have joined FCN for a 'Yarn in a Barn' over the past few months. These gatherings have involved bringing farming people together to socialise, have something to eat, and to share experiences and solutions to topical farming issues. A Yarn in a Barn event in May even had Clarkson's Farm's Kaleb Cooper show his support by attending. Many thanks to the Mercer Charitable Foundation and the Richard Oatley Trust (South West) for their support for this initiative.

DORSET LOOKOUTS PROJECT

The farming community in Dorset is benefitting from a new initiative to encourage people to be 'Lookouts' in their local area, watching for signs that others may be experiencing difficulties and encouraging them to talk. The 'Dorset Lookouts' group is made up of people who live and work in the agricultural industry and understand the challenges that farming faces over the coming years. FCN is working with the group and providing training and support. FCN has a wide network of volunteers located throughout England and Wales, including a group of volunteers in Dorset who are championing the initiative.

FARMING HELP SURVEY REVEALS WHAT FARMERS ARE MOST PROUD OF

Innovation, sustainability, high standards of animal welfare and a strong sense of community are among the key reasons farmers are proud of agriculture in the UK.

This is according to a survey conducted by the Farming Help charities (FCN, Addington Fund and Forage Aid) in January as part of the LAMMA Show at Birmingham NEC. Over 500 farmers responded to the survey, which also encouragingly found over 70% of farmers would ask a charity for help if they felt they needed it.

Farming Help also chaired two panel discussions during this year's LAMMA Show. One focused on myth-busting and celebrating the industry, while the second panel focused on careers in agriculture.

We also teamed up to have a joined-up presence at The Royal Cornwall Show and The Royal Welsh Show, among others – highlighting our close working relationship with the other members of the Farming Help alliance.

NEW SHORT FILM SHOWCASES FCN VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

A new video trailer launched in June showcases the hard work of FCN volunteers supporting farmers and farming families during difficult times and through periods of change. The video is available via FCN's YouTube channel and can be accessed by searching for 'We are FCN' or via the link here https://youtu.be/NWKQ55ODzSg

Feel free to use this video at any events where you may wish to promote the work of FCN and raise awareness of the support services we provide.

FUNDRAISING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Corporate partnerships and support from allied industries, societies, other charities, and associations are extremely important to all aspects of our work at FCN. We are always very grateful for everyone who chooses to support our charity. Below are just a few of the fantastic fundraisers we have seen over the last few months. We wish we had space to include everyone's stories!

We greatly appreciate the efforts of everyone who raises awareness of FCN and fundraises for our charity, allowing us to continue providing vital support to everyone across agriculture.

If you represent an organisation and would like to partner with or work alongside FCN, please email Georgina Lamb, Senior Partnerships Manager, on georgina@fcn.org.uk

24 HOUR SHEARATHON IN SUPPORT OF FCN

Worcestershire farmer and shearer Michael McPherson completed a 24-hour "shearathon" in May, raising more than £20,000 for FCN and Cancer Research UK. He managed to shear 816 Texel-cross and North Country Mules, working in two-hour stints followed by a half-hour break to get through the 24-hour challenge. This has been an incredible feat and we thank Michael and everyone involved!

MARATHON RUNNERS DON THEIR RUNNING SHOES

We'd like to thank everyone who has run marathons in support of FCN over the last few months. This includes FCN Ambassador and Lincolnshire farmer Charles Anyan (Manchester Marathon and Leeds Marathon) and Annabel Richards, Daniel Pidgeon and Kate Lewin who ran the TCS London Marathon in support of FCN in April. This is such incredible support and we're so grateful to everyone choosing to support the work of our charity.

AGRICULTURAL JOURNALISTS SCALE THE THREE PEAKS

Members of the British Guild of Agricultural Journalists (BGAJ) summitted the Yorkshire Three Peaks in May. Setting off from Horton-in-Ribblesdale and scaling the peaks of Pen-Y-Ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough and climbing more than 5,000 feet in the process, the group has raised over £4,000 split between FCN, RSABI and the guild's own charitable trust. Thanks everyone for supporting FCN!

OLIVIA AND CARYSS WALK THE COTSWOLD WAY

Earlier this year FCN supporters Liv and Caryss embarked on their 5-day Cotswold Way journey (102 miles from Bath Abbey to Chipping Campden) to raise funds and awareness for FCN.

In 2022 they set up an Instagram page called Let's Get Talking to raise awareness of mental health, reduce the stigma, and to let people know about support charities. Their walk raised over £4,000 in support of FCN – an incredible outcome!

LEN'S LIGHT

LEN'S LIGHT CAMPAIGN SUPPORTING RURAL MENTAL HEALTH

'Len's Light' is a national awareness campaign to support the mental health of people in rural communities. Lynda and Andy Eadon tragically lost their son, Len, to suicide at 22 years of age. The campaign, which launched at Kenilworth Show in June, has seen Andy driving a tractor over 2,000 miles this summer, travelling through Scotland, England and Wales. Along the length of this journey the tractor has visited many livestock markets.

The campaign is communicating the vital message that no one in rural communities should feel isolated or alone. Since Len's death in January 2022 over £100,000 has been raised for the charities in his name: FCN, PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide and The Farm Safety Foundation. Find out more by following the 'Len's Light' page on Facebook.

FCN CONTRIBUTES TO HOUSE OF COMMONS RURAL MENTAL HEALTH REPORT

Evidence provided by FCN has contributed to a House of Commons report on rural mental health published in May by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. This evidence includes research conducted by FCN and the University of Exeter's Centre for Rural Policy Research into loneliness and isolation in rural communities, and information regarding support provided by our volunteer network to the farming community.

FCN was also invited to the NFU Summer Reception on 6 June to discuss the important topic of mental health and wellbeing in rural communities and to speak with MPs about challenges in the sector.

THE FCN VOLUNTEERS HELPING THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE

We have written a feature about how some of our volunteers have been supporting Ukrainian families over the last year. This involved in-depth interviews with members of Ukrainian families. The article is hopeful about the future and shows how the families are rebuilding and staying positive during this incredibly difficult time. We thank Margaret Herbert, Geoff Sansome and the families for speaking with us and sharing their stories. Access this feature via the FCN website.

REMEMBERING PETER JINMAN OBE

Peter Jinman OBE, Chair of the Addington Fund, passed away in late May. Peter was incredibly well respected and a lifelong advocate for farming, rural communities and encouraging new entrants into agriculture.

His work with Addington Fund and the many other organisations he was affiliated with during his lifetime benefited countless people.

Jude McCann, Chief Executive Officer of FCN, said: "Peter was a true gentleman, always supportive of the work of FCN and highly respected by all who had the privilege to know him."

FCN VOLUNTEER AWARDED MBE IN KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

An FCN volunteer has been awarded an MBE after decades of service in support of farmers and people living in rural communities. Suzie Wilkinson, who volunteers with FCN in Somerset, has received her MBE as part of the King's Birthday Honours in June. Suzie was recently made an Associate of the Royal Agricultural Society in further recognition of her hard work. Suzie continues to volunteer with FCN, mentoring and sharing her experience with new volunteers. Well done, Suzie!

FCN WORD TREE HIGHLIGHTS FCN'S IMPACT

We pulled together some of the key words people associate with FCN on social media, through testimonials and in media coverage, and created a 'word tree' to reflect this feedback. This feedback is a true testament to the hard work of everyone involved with FCN and it is encouraging to us that we are viewed in this positive way by the farming community.

BRITAIN'S FITTEST FARMERS SUPPORTING FCN

This year FCN has teamed up again with Farmers Weekly as part of their Britain's Fittest Farmer competition. Alongside the main event, which challenges competitors to undertake a series of physical activities, the FCN FarmWell Award has returned for 2023. This invites people in farming to submit short videos on social media about how they stay mentally well on the farm, providing tips and other useful information and positive messages.

This year FCN Ambassador and Lincolnshire farmer Charles Anyan has been a judge as part of the competition. In addition, in June Farm Fitness founder Tom Kemp completed a 20-hour rope climb challenge in support of FCN. Kemp scaled the rope 693 times, reaching a height of 4,100m. He will continue his support for FCN by hosting the Britain's Fittest Farmer competition later in the year at his family's Essex farm.

HOW TO SUPPORT FCN

"FCN's proactive approach has allowed me to get things back on track and move forward in a positive way. I am most grateful."
Jennifer, Farmer, Dorset

We all rely on farmers three times a day. Please help us to continue supporting everyone working across agriculture. With British farming facing an uncertain future, FCN is here to help farmers and farming families through the challenges and changes ahead – but this will not be possible without your support. FCN relies solely on donations and grants in order to continue supporting our world-class farmers. A donation from you, your parish, associated clubs or organisations you may belong to could help a member of the farming community access the support they desperately need. Please do help us spread the word and gather support for FCN. We have been extremely grateful for generous legacies to FCN in recent years. For more information about leaving a gift to FCN in your Will, visit: fcn.org.uk/leave-a-gift-in-your-will

There are a number of other ways you can support FCN, such as:

- Fundraising - celebrations could include walks, bike rides, corporate sponsorship or any other ideas you may have. We welcome organisations supportive of our work reaching out to us with fundraising ideas.
- Volunteering - we welcome anyone passionate about helping the farming community to join as a volunteer. There are numerous volunteering roles available, including taking Helpline calls, handling casework, fundraising and publicity. More information is available at: fcn.org.uk/volunteering
- Share your story - FCN treats all cases confidentially, but we are grateful to anyone who is willing to talk about the support they have received from FCN. Please email Alex Phillimore, Head of Communications and Development, on alex@fcn.org.uk if you would like to share your story (details such as name and age will be anonymised).
- Donate - visit fcn.org.uk and click "Donate Online" in the top right hand corner, or send a cheque, made payable to "FCN" or "The Farming Community Network", to The Farming Community Network, Manor Farm, West Haddon, Northamptonshire, NN6 7AQ.

Alternatively you can scan this QR code to be taken directly to our donation page.
If you would like to discuss how you can support the work of FCN, call the FCN head office on 01788 510866 or email help@fcn.org.uk. The office is open 9-5 Monday - Friday.

FCN

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