Issue No. 18

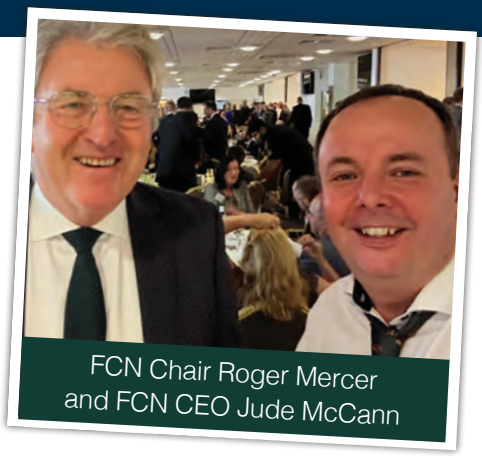
FCN THE FARMING COMMUNITY NETWORK

Winter 2025

Here for you

30th Anniversary Special

CELEBRATING THE VITAL WORK OF FCN DURING OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY



FCN Chair Roger Mercer and FCN CEO Jude McCann

As 2025 comes to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported the work of our charity during our 30th anniversary year. Since the late Christopher Jones MBE founded FCN in 1995, we have we been 'walking with' farmers and their families through difficult times and periods of change.

Each year we continue to help thousands of farming people through our helpline, local case work and FarmWell website and initiatives. This is only possible thanks to the dedication and commitment of our volunteer network; more than 400 individuals who understand farming life and give their time to listen, to support and to offer hope and guidance to our farming community.

Our volunteers' local knowledge of farming across the counties and varied farming landscapes and geographies of the UK is essential in allowing us to tailor our support to farmers' needs. Farming is a tight-knit community, and it is thanks to our regional volunteers and staff teams that we are able to engender trust, build relationships and help people to find a positive way forward.

This year has been such an incredible celebration of our charity and our growing network, and our volunteers have led the charge in organising a wide variety of events to mark three decades of FCN. You can read more about these events on the following page.

You can also learn more about some of the exciting projects and initiatives we are involved in and our partnership work to support farmer's health and wellbeing, in addition to fundraisers and other support FCN has been honoured to receive.

Thank you again to all involved in FCN, and all those who support the work of our charity – it is arguably needed now more than ever before.

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

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

SINCERE THANKS TO OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

In October a number of FCN trustees came to the end of their terms with our Board. On behalf of FCN, we would like to thank Mark Suthern, Sally Steadman, Peter Havers, Barbara Bray and Bishop Mark Rylands for their many years of support and guidance, and Hakeem Ojo, who concluded his two-year Board Apprenticeship with FCN.

We would like to congratulate Roger Mercer (photographed top of page, left, with our CEO, Jude McCann), who has taken on the role of Chair of the Board, and Olivia Seccombe, who has been appointed our new Vice-Chair. We are also delighted to welcome four new trustees to our Board: (top left to right) Elle Vercoe-Gibson, Ciara Williams, Wyn Owen and Lucia Slack.

You can read more about our Board of Trustees here: **fcn.org.uk/our-organisation/**

30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION EVENTS

Thank you to all of our volunteers for leading our 30th anniversary celebrations this year. There have been so many events and activities taking place recognising the incredible work of our volunteer network and our vital farming community.

This includes:

- **20th September**: The Revd Hermione Morris from our Mid-Wales Volunteering Group organised a successful 30th Anniversary concert at St Myllin's Church in Llanfyllin. Guest artistes were Côr Penllys and the Revd Cass Meurig Thomas. Thanks so much to all involved.

- **25th September:** FCN volunteers from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumbria and Northumberland gathered at the Pavilions at The Great Yorkshire Showground in Harrogate. We heard updates, reports and recollections from each county, which were full of positivity and fascinating to hear, with some stretching all the way back to 1995.

- **28th September:** 500 people attended a harvest service at Sherborne Abbey to celebrate the work carried out by FCN in support of the rural community. The event was organised by FCN's Dorset Group – a passionate group of volunteers who work tirelessly to promote the work of FCN. Thank you to the Rector of Sherborne Abbey, Martin Lee, who hosted this event and provided the Choir led by Mr James Henderson, alongside a quarter peal of bells in FCN's honour. Many thanks as well to the 45 businesses and producers that sponsored the event with funds of over £5,000 and hampers for the raffle. Photograph credit: Nigel Gidney.

- **5th October:** Harvest services in recognition and support of the work of FCN took place at Canterbury Cathedral, Norwich Cathedral and St Edmundsbury Cathedral. Thank you to the FCN team of volunteers, trustees and staff members who organised and attended these beautiful services.

- **12th October:** We held our Cumbria Harvest Festival - a time to celebrate and give thanks to those who tend to the land and go above and beyond to ensure we have food on our plates. It was also an opportunity to celebrate the 30th anniversary of FCN. Thank you to everyone who organised, contributed and joined us for this very special service, including the Cumbria Agricultural Chaplaincy and Cumbria Young Farmers.

- **1st November:** Well done to our fantastic FCN Staffordshire volunteers who organised an incredible Farmers Ball. More than 400 farmers attended this event. It was a true celebration of our farming community, as well as 30 years of FCN 'walking with' farmers and their families. The event could not have happened without the generous support of sponsors and donators of auction and raffle prizes. The Ball raised an incredible £25,000. Thank you to the Group for their hard work and planning. Special thanks also to Lynda and Andy Eadon. Andy gave an inspirational speech about resilience and the Len's Light initiative.

FUNDRAISING

Thank you to everyone who supports the work of FCN. We are grateful to the many individuals, Young Farmers' Clubs, agri-businesses, veterinary practices and other organisations that fundraise for the charity. Fundraising helps us to continue to support farming people through the challenges and changes ahead, ensuring FCN is available to help 365 days of the year.

NFU MUTUAL CHARITABLE TRUST SUPPORTING FCN'S FRONTLINE SERVICES

FCN is delighted to be the recipient of a £70,000 donation from NFU Mutual Charitable Trust. This generous donation will support FCN's core frontline services, including facilitating our volunteers visiting farms, providing pastoral support and being available 365 days of the year via our Helpline.

FCN CHARITY PARTNER FOR FARMING AWARDS AND CONFERENCES

FCN was the chosen charity this year for a number of prestigious Awards events, including:

- The National Women in Agriculture Awards on 6th May
- The Cumbria Farmer Awards on 22nd August
- The Farmers Weekly Awards on 2nd October
- The British Farming Awards on 16th October

Thank you to the organisers for inviting FCN, and for all the organisations and conferences supporting FCN this year as their chosen charity, including the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA), the World Agri-Tech Innovation Summit, the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) and the Institute of Agricultural Management (IAgrM).

PLATTS AGRICULTURE RAISE £15,000 FOR FCN

FCN partner Platts Agriculture have raised over £15,000 in support of FCN, having pledged to donate a percentage of every bale sold to Platts customers. They launched an excellent video about their campaign to support the charity, which can be accessed on their social media channels.

THE ELEANOR CHALLENGE

Michael and Di Kavanagh have shared the heartbreaking story of losing their 2-year-old daughter, Eleanor, in January to viral pneumonia. On Sunday 26th January, Eleanor (photographed) and her big sister Fiona went to bed like any other night. The following morning Di went into the girls' room to discover the unthinkable had happened - Eleanor had passed away in her sleep. In memory of Eleanor, Michael and Di have been fundraising for FCN, the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, Child Bereavement UK and 2Wish. We are honoured they have chosen to support our charity and shared their story.

THANK YOU TO YOUNG FARMERS' CLUBS

Thank you to the incredible Young Farmers' Clubs across the UK who do so much to provide a community and support network for young people in rural communities.
We are honoured to have been the chosen charity for so many YFCs this year. We truly appreciate everyone's generosity and support. Photographed: Vale O'Lune Young Farmers' Club, who raised an incredible £8,630 in support of FCN through their fundraising efforts.

PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTER – SIGN UP FOR FREE

Gas and electricity distributors provide a Priority Service for those who need it. Those of pensionable age, those with young children and those with health issues are amongst those who can sign up for this free service. If you are on the Register, in the event of a power disruption, you will be reconnected as a priority, back-up power can be supplied, and you can request checks on appliances and meters to ensure they're running as sustainably as possible.

FCN is working in partnership with the Northern Gas Networks to raise awareness of this offering and to encourage more people to be included on the Priority Services Register.

You can sign up for Northern Gas Network's Priority Services Register by scanning the QR code or searching online. Information is also provided about priority registers for other utilities in different areas of the country. Please use Partner Code 240.

#NIPITINTHEBUD CAMPAIGN SHARING RURAL STORIES

As part of the Rural Communities Cancer Project – a UK-wide partnership between FCN and Macmillan Cancer Support – and our **#NipItInTheBud** campaign, we are helping to tell the stories of people in our community who have been impacted by cancer; encouraging early detection and reducing stigma.

David Purdy, a Business Manager at John Deere, has been with the company for over 30 years. In late 2023, David began experiencing difficulty swallowing food. By February 2024, David was referred to the hospital, where an endoscope revealed a diagnosis of cancer of the lower oesophagus. David underwent chemotherapy and surgery in the following months and completed his treatment in November 2024, and a subsequent scan showed no remaining cancerous tissue. David has shared his story in an effort to encourage others to book an appointment with their GP should they notice a change in their health.

Jane Gardner, a sheep farmer living in Warwickshire, is urging people to be more aware of the signs of skin cancer - after being diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma in 2020. She emphasises the importance of regular skin checks and encourages others to consult their GP if they notice any changes in their skin. You can read David and Jane's stories on the FCN website: **fcn.org.uk/cancersupport**

The Rural Communities Cancer Project continues to reach thousands of people in our farming and rural communities, raising awareness of signs and symptoms of cancer, and importantly encouraging people to prioritise their health and wellbeing.

#TIMETOACT CAMPAIGN

Through our #TimeToAct campaign we are developing a wide range of resources via our FarmWell website to support farmers and their businesses. There is information around topics such as business appraisals, partnership agreements, succession planning and more. You can access this information here: **farmwell.org.uk/time-to-act**

Noticed the appearance of an unusual lump or bump?

If you notice anything ongoing, unusual or unexplained, talk to your GP without delay and **nip it in the bud**.

FCN | THE FARMING COMMUNITY NETWORK

In partnership with

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

SCAN ME

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND SUPPORT THE WORK OF FCN

The services of FCN are arguably needed now more than ever before. FCN helps over 12,500 people each year to find a way forward through any challenges they may be facing. It is thanks to the efforts of our committed volunteers that many people are still farming today. We have been called a 'lifeline', a 'trusted friend' and a 'vital part of British agriculture'.

British farmers work tirelessly to produce the food we eat and serve as custodians of our idyllic countryside and natural environment. However, our vital farming community also faces an uncertain future. Against a backdrop of market volatility, political instability and a rapidly changing climate, many farmers are worried about what the future holds for them, their families and their businesses.

There are a number of ways you can get involved or support FCN, including:

- **Make a donation** – visit **fcn.org.uk/donate** or send a cheque, made payable to "FCN" or "The Farming Community Network", to The Farming Community Network, Bragborough Hall Business Centre, Welton Rd, Braunston, Northamptonshire, NN11 7JG.

  Alternatively you can scan the QR code at the top of this page to be taken directly to our donation page.
- **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 can be anonymised).

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.

LEAVE A LEGACY THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME

"Leaving a legacy allows you to help and support individuals and organisations you are passionate about long after you are gone. It lays a seed and implants a memory that will last a lifetime. It is a privilege to be leaving a legacy to FCN."

- **Roger Jefcoate CBE DL**

Gifts left to FCN make a real and lasting difference by helping to ensure that everyone can access our services when they need it most – improving the health and wellbeing of farming generations to come. Visit FCN's website to learn more about how legacies support the work of our charity: **fcn.org.uk/legacies**

FCN

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