



NETWORK NEWS

The newsletter of the
National Farm
Attractions Network



National
Farm
Attractions
Network

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CONFERENCE SUCCESS

Ian Pigott

Farm and rural attractions from around the UK gathered in Milton Keynes on February 11th and 12th, for the annual National Farm Attractions Network (NFAN) conference and awards, celebrating the best in farm parks and countryside attractions.

Highlights included a hat-trick of awards for Walby Farm Park in Cumbria, a fascinating tour of Mead Open Farm in Bedfordshire, and a behind the scenes tour of MK Dons Football Stadium, which everyone who attended seemed to enjoy, especially the 'magic bedrooms', which appeared in moments after the executive boxes were finished with for the day.

Outgoing NFAN Chairman, Matt Heast, said: "The 2015 conference, trade show and awards are so important for the industry and were a great success. The event provides an opportunity to meet and network with fellow operators, learn from a packed speaker programme and meet key suppliers, all under one roof."

The Trade Exhibition kicked off with an evening drinks reception prior to the awards dinner. It provided delegates with even more time to meet key suppliers from the

farm attraction industry. Many of the trade delegates said that it had created a more relaxed and less time-pressed atmosphere for talking to attractions owners.

The awards dinner, which was sponsored by Agility Marketing, saw Walby Farm Park scoop three top awards; Best Food & Beverage, Customer Service Excellence and the top award, the Jim Keetch Farm Attraction of the Year. Other award winners were Cannon Hall Farm in Yorkshire who won Best Innovation and Old Macdonald's Farm in Essex who won Best in Education. Digitickets took the award of Best Trade Supplier. See full list on page 3.

Ian Pigott, founder of Open Farm Sunday, presented the Keynote Speech to more than 150 delegates. He gave an insight into his reasons for setting up Open Farm Sunday, a national farm open day which started in 2006 and has subsequently welcomed more than 1.4 million people onto UK farms.

Other presenters included Paul Kelley, Chief Executive of BALPPA, who gave a presentation on the investment life cycle for attractions, Chris Webster from Wink Associates spoke about the science and art

of predicting visitor attraction footfall, and Beth Cooper from Timberplay gave an insight into the psychology of play. Delegates also heard useful and interesting presentations from three different farm attractions who all stage successful Christmas events.

NFAN would like to thank Gold Conference Sponsors: S. Gregory & Co, Marsh & Company and Davies & Co; Pre-Conference Tour Sponsors: Innovative Leisure and Unique Catering & Management Services Ltd; Drinks Reception Sponsors: Rupert Oliver's Ideas Factory and Kids Play Day Nursery, as well as Awards Dinner Sponsor: Agility Marketing.

Thanks also to those who organised the pre-event tours, networking and learning opportunities at 360 Play (an innovative play centre in Stevenage), Kids Play Day Nursery (the same brand behind Willows Farm Day Nursery and others) and Mead Open Farm, where delegates became extremely competitive on the new Sky Trail 20ft high ropes course!

Conference presentations can be downloaded from www.farmattractions.net.

Diary Events 2015

Cotswold Farm Park Open Day, Gloucestershire **Wednesday 6th May 2015**

Winner of Farm Attraction of the Year 2014. Home to Countryfile's Adam Henson whose father Joe was a pioneer in the farm attractions sector.

Tulleys Farm Open Day, West Sussex **Friday 9th October 2015**

Seasonal events can be big business. Halloween family fun, Shocktober Fest fright nights and a fast growing Christmas event. Option to stay late and experience Shocktober Fest.

South Wales Roadshow **Monday 15th to Wednesday 17th June 2015**

All aboard the coach for two days of networking and attraction visits including Folly Farm which has grown from a small farm park into an award winning zoo, Heatherton who have a pay per use pricing model and visits to other fascinating venues. Details available shortly.

Workshops

The first workshop of the year was held at White Post Farm, where delegates spent the day with Health & Safety practitioner Ray Hipkin. Amongst the topics covered were practical ways to implement the Industry Code of Practice and play equipment safety checklists. We hope to run another Health & Safety Workshop later in the year. Other Workshops being planned include Social Media, Catering Results Booster, and a follow-up to last year's Tough At The Top Workshop, this time for Senior Managers. Details will be circulated via email and on the website.

NFAN Farm Attraction of the Year 2015 award winners



The big winner on the night was Walby Farm Park in Cumbria who scooped a hat-trick of awards; Best Food & Beverage, Customer Service Excellence and the top award, the Jim Keetch Farm Attraction of the Year.

Owner Neil Millbourn from Walby Farm Park was delighted. He said: "To win not one but three awards is amazing! This is a great achievement and recognises our team's hard work and commitment to 'Team Walby'. We are continually looking to improve Walby Farm Park and add to our visitor's experience. The quality and entertainment value of farm attractions throughout the UK improves year on year, to reach this standard is an amazing thing when you know how high the standard is now!"

The Lifetime Achievement award was presented to Barry Davies of Davies & Co. In presenting the award

Matt Heast said: "Barry has been instrumental over the past nearly 20 years in nurturing and growing the National Farm Attractions Network to be the successful membership organisation it is today."

"The NFAN conference was extremely well organised and the trade show was far better than many I have been to. The whole day was well structured to provide a wide variety of speakers who were able to touch on many aspects of farm attractions. As a business looking to start a farm attraction I can think of nothing better to have gone to. The best part was that everyone was so friendly and wanted to give advice on how we could start out in the farm attraction sector, which I thought was lovely."

**Tom Hunt, Marketing Manager,
Ludlow Food Centre, Shropshire
(First time farm delegate)**



NEW CHAIRMAN AND TREASURER

Committee member and former Vice-Chair Colin Evans (pictured), from Cantref Adventure Farm in the Brecon Beacons, has been appointed Chairman of NFAN. Richard Waring from Rand Farm Park in Lincoln is NFAN's new Treasurer, taking over from Barry Davies of Davies & Co, who remains an honorary member of the committee.

FACEBOOK NETWORKING GROUP

Are you on Facebook? Join the NFAN Facebook Group and connect with fellow members. It's a place to share, ask questions, network and support.

It will run alongside the website Forum which is still a great place to post requests and leave comments. To keep it manageable initially we will try to have just one representative on the FB group per member. You need to join through your personal FB account not your page. This is a Closed Group so only members of the Group will be able to see the posts. You should have received an email invitation, if you haven't please email info@farmattractions.net with the email address you would like the invitation to be sent to.

New members

Farm attractions

- Boston Park Farm, Doncaster
- Bluebell Dairy, Derby
- Humble by Nature, Monmouth
- Ludlow Food Centre, Ludlow
- Loughwell Farm Park, Co Galway, Ireland
- Wild Animal Adventures, Stockton-on-Tees
- Wetheriggs Animal Rescue, County Durham

Trade members

- FunFear Ltd, Surrey
- RPS Planning & Development, Oxfordshire
- Royal County Products, Co. Meath, Ireland
- Little Grey Fergie/Farmyard Stories Ltd, London

THE WINNERS

Jim Keech Farm Attraction of the Year Award

Winner - Walby Farm Park, Cumbria

Best Food and Beverage Award

Winner - Walby Farm Park, Cumbria
Runner up - Adam Henson's Cotswold Farm Park
Highly Commended - Sharnfold Farm and Lee Valley Park Farms

Customer Service Excellence

Winner - Walby Farm Park, Cumbria
Highly Commended - Stockley Farm Park
Highly Commended - Kent Life

Lifetime Achievement Award

Awarded to - Barry Davies, Davies & Co., Kettering

Highly Commended - Chris Murray - Pennywell Farm
Highly Commended - Tim Rollings - Fishers Adventure Farm Park

New Innovation Award

Winner - Cannon Hall Farm, Yorkshire
Joint runners up - Park Hall the Countryside Experience and Fishers Adventure Farm Park

Best Trade Supplier

Winner - DigiTickets, Devon

Best in Education

Winner - Old MacDonald's Farm, Essex
Runner up - Hall Hill Farm
Highly Commended - Barleylands and Hollow Trees Farm

"This was our first time attending the event and we found it to be a very positive experience. The venue and location were both excellent and the attendees were engaged and enthusiastic. We have received a number of orders directly from the event and have a number of positive leads we are still working on."

Ian Dickens, Sales Director, Choc-affair Ltd, York (First time exhibitor)



2016 Award categories

Entries for the 2016 awards will be open in May. Award categories will be:

- Best Innovation
- Best Trade Supplier
- Best Food & Beverage
- Best in Education
- Best Digital Presence
- Large Farm Attraction of the year (over 75k visitors)
- Small Farm Attraction of the year (under 75k)
- Lifetime Achievement Award (to be selected by Chair & Vice Chair)

NFAN Committee

Chairman Colin Evans Cantref Adventure Farm
Treasurer Richard Waring Rand Farm Park
Barry Davies Davies & Co
Matthew Heast Mead Open Farm
Lesley Knight Rupert Oliver's Ideas Factory
Neil Milbourn Walby Farm Park

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Phil Pickersgill Innovative Leisure
Louise Possegger Springbarn Farm Park
Richard Powell Park Hall Countryside Experience
Steve Vinden Odds Farm Park
Andrew Wolfe Willows Activity Farm

Tel: 07860 868104
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Tel: 07841 562559
Tel: 01727 822106

All general enquiries should be directed to the NFAN office - tel: 01904 615059, email info@farmattractions.net.

Helpline – free advice for NFAN members

As a NFAN member you are entitled to free advice from the following experts. Please limit your free calls to one per annum. The experts can advise you further, subject to their terms of business. You will find them all prepared to offer special rates for NFAN members.

Planning legislation and business rates

Barry Davies, Davies & Co. (Chartered Surveyors)
Tel: 01536 524808
Email: info@daviesandco.co.uk
www.daviesandco.co.uk

Specialising in planning legislation including change of use, enforcement notices, advertising boards and business rates appeals.

Health & Safety/Environmental Health Guidance

Ray Hipkin, Health & Safety Practitioner
Tel: 01844 353407
Email: randhipkin@btinternet.com
www.rayhipkin.co.uk

Exclusive insurance scheme for NFAN members

Steve Taylor, Marsh and Company Insurance Brokers
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Catering

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www.turpinsmale.co.uk

Advice on all matters catering including help with increasing sales, improving standards and making margins.

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