

KENT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY REPORT RECORD GRANTS FOR FARMING & EDUCATION

March 2015

The Kent County Agricultural Society reported record financial support at the Annual General Meeting in February 2015. The Society made £100,000 worth of charitable grants and subsidies for the farming and rural sector in 2014.

The Society's Farming and Education Committee is jointly responsible for ensuring that the aims and objectives of the Society are met and each year make substantial contributions to a large number of rural organisations in the county.

Stuart Gibbons, Chairman of the Committee explained "The Kent County Show, held in July, is the Agricultural Society's main event and enables us as one of the County's leading rural charities to fund and support a variety of rural organisations and individuals. We are delighted to ensure that many good causes will receive grants from us. We hope it will total in excess of £100,000 this year".

The objectives of the Society when it was formed in 1923 was for the encouragement of agriculture generally, improvement in breeding and rearing of livestock and to encourage the invention and improvement of agricultural implements and machinery.

The core objectives have been maintained over the years with only small amendments to reflect the changing farming landscape and public understanding of the industry.

The Kent County Agricultural Society now exists for:

- The improvement of agriculture, forestry, horticulture, allied industries, rural crafts and the breeding of livestock.
- The demonstration of improved methods connected with the above.
- The holding of an Annual Show in Kent.
- The encouragement of agricultural and horticultural education, research and experimental work.

This is achieved in a variety of ways and administered by staff, officers and committee members. Each year the Kent County Show subsidises or fully supports a number of businesses and organisations including a 50% discount for all Agricultural Stands attending, support for organisations including Kent Federation of Horticultural Societies, Kent Guides and Scouts, Kent Wildlife Trust and many other small charities that receive subsidised or free space at the three day Show. In addition eleven other organisations received specific support in 2014 totalling £34,550*.

The Farming and Education Committee organise the annual Living Land event during May. This one day education event is offered to Kent School children in years 3 and 4 and provides an opportunity to see and touch farm animals, taste local produce, understand seasonality, watch demonstrations and be part of Kent's largest outdoor classroom.

Kevin Attwood, Kent County Agricultural Society Chairman said, "Being able to put on an event specifically aimed at educating children about food, farming and the environment fills a vital gap in the curriculum. Taking primary age children out of the classroom has become increasingly difficult and costly for schools. We offer this event free of charge which makes it accessible for both schools and parents".

The Living Land has been running since 2003 and is mainly financed by the Society with the generosity of volunteers and organisations who give their time for the benefit of those attending.

The Farming and Education Committee make a number of monetary awards each year, the largest being to Kent Young Farmers. During the previous five years the Society has provided in excess of £50,000 to young farmers clubs in Kent. Historically funding had been limited to farm based clubs for capital only items.

In 2014, the Committee took the decision to change the way funding was allocated to enable all clubs to apply for a grant. The Society are delighted to announce that £10,000 has so far been awarded for 2015 projects which include, trailers, flocks of lambs, sheep equipment, animal housing and fencing.

The Hooson Award is granted to a young person under 21, hoping to develop a career in the rural sector. The 2014 award was divided between two worthy applicants, Grace Twyman from the North School YFC in Ashford and Katie Manvell from New Line Learning YFC. Both are studying Agricultural Courses at Hadlow College.

The Lady Astor Award is given for the 'Best Kent Young Farmer of the Year'. In 2014 Daisy Fermor from Homewood School Farm won the title due to her enthusiasm and motivation in keeping the club running, despite it having an uncertain future at the time.

The Farming and Education Committee sponsor the Kent Ploughing Championship, provide financial assistance to the Kent Branch of the Women's Food and Farming Union to make school visits and provide bursaries for FE or HE students to pursue a career in food, farming or the rural sector. The latter funds up to three students with a £1,000 per year grant for a maximum of three years.

The Society also awards a number trophy's and prizes throughout the year including The Long Service Award, Presidents Bowl, The Vice-Presidents Award, The CLA Trophy, The Edward Hardy Trophy and the Town & Country Award.

Stuart Gibbons, Committee Chairman said, "Many people are unaware that the Kent County Agricultural Society is a land-based Charity which works extremely hard to support our rural communities and the rural economy. Every ticket that is sold for

the Kent County Show helps fund our expanding education and awards programme. We are delighted to have so many visitors to the Kent County Show each year which in turn enables us to help more rural organisations”.

****ENDS****

*Kent Beekeeper Association £1,350, Kent Goat Club £3,000, Kent Federation of Horticultural Societies £3,200, Kent Guild of Spinners, Dyers & Weavers £500, Kent Poultry Club £1,500, Sheep Shearing £1,600, Sheep Show £4,200, Friends of Kent Life £500, Why Farming Matters in Kent £5,300, Wool Tent £800, Kent Young Farmers Clubs £12,600.

The cost of the Living Land event is approximately £15,000
Kent Young Farmers & FE/HE Bursaries £20,000
Hooson Award £500
Lady Astor Award £250
Additional Stand subsidy equated to £66,000 in 2014

For more information contact Lucy Hegarty, Show Manager
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Kent County Show – 10, 11, 12 July 2015
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