

Suffolk Agricultural Association – Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022

Foreword

This document sets out the strategic vision and values of the Suffolk Agricultural Association (SAA) and how the organisation charts its development over the next five years. It is a working document and so subject to change and or development over time.

A significant challenge for the SAA is to demonstrate its relevance to a rapidly urbanising population that has become less connected with the rural areas around them, how their food is produced and those who work in it. The SAA needs to inform about how high quality food is produced and the wider impact of agricultural technologies in shaping a better, more sustainable world.

Food, farming and the rural environment cannot be disregarded in a county like Suffolk as it remains a highly relevant driver of both economic growth and technological innovation.

Young people should be encouraged to open their minds to the diverse and sophisticated career opportunities available, on their doorstep, in our rural economy. It is the role of the SAA, working with others, to open these young minds and to continue to facilitate lifelong learning about food, farming and the wider impact of agricultural technologies in shaping a sustainable future.



About Us

The SAA is a registered charity founded in 1831 to further advance agricultural learning and education. Our role today is still to promote awareness of food, farming and the rural economy and its importance, through multiple channels and activities and to encourage farming innovation. It is also our role to inspire young people to be more connected with how food is produced and to consider the wealth of career opportunities offered in the farming economy.

The Suffolk Show is attended by up to 90,000 visitors a year, over two days, during the May half-term. It is one of the foremost agricultural shows in the UK and remains a county show at heart. It provides the platform for education through entertainment to a diverse audience.

The SAA is a membership organisation and relies on the participation of over 300 active volunteer stewards who contribute to the organisation of the Suffolk Show and other educational activities.

Over the last two decades, the SAA has developed a broad range of educational initiatives to enhance the understanding of young people about food, farming and the countryside. These programmes aim to raise awareness about how food is produced, farming innovation and to encourage young people to consider careers in the rural economy thus creating a talent pool for the future.

A commercial trading arm (Trinity Park Events Ltd) operates alongside the charity to make a contribution to its income through year round rental of the site and its infrastructure. This was further developed 10 years ago with the re-brand to Trinity Park and the opening of the purpose built conference and event centre. This is now a flagship commercial event venue for the county and region, attracting many business and consumer events.



County of Suffolk

Our Vision is for:

A county community that fully understands, values and appreciates a sustainable agricultural industry and as an organisation be nationally recognised as progressive, influential and highly regarded.

Supporting this the SAA delivers a county show of the highest standard and innovative education programmes that support the development of the land based economy whilst raising consumer awareness about food, farming, the countryside and wider environment.

Our Purpose is to:

Encourage and facilitate positive engagement between the public and those working in food, farming and the countryside.

This builds awareness and trust whilst advancing education and innovation to support the growth of the rural economy. Central to this is:

- a first class county show,
- education programmes, drawing on the passion, skills and enthusiasm of our members,
- our volunteers
- and a network for farmers and those engaged in the rural economy to share knowledge and to socialise.

Our Values are to:

- Work openly with all our stakeholders
- Uphold the highest standards whilst remembering our traditions
- Take pride in our estate and maintain it in the best possible condition
- Conduct our business with integrity and in a spirit of positivity and respect
- Supporting Suffolk producers and providers



Stakeholders

Our main stakeholders are:

- SAA Trustees, employees, members and stewards
- Farmers and others working in the rural economy
- Tradestand holders
- Sponsors
- Funders and strategic partners
- Young people and their parents
- Visitor public
- Regional business community



Key Strategic Aim - The Organisation

To raise our profile as a charity by being a force for good and central to all matters food, farming and the countryside in Suffolk. To build a dynamic and vibrant membership association with relevance to all farmers and those engaged in Suffolk's rural economy. To harness the commitment and enthusiasm of our members and volunteers to disseminate knowledge and education about food and farming.

Key deliverables will include:

- Review of overall membership proposition, including a corporate membership offer. Demonstrate value, worth and relevance to our members building an attractive 'year-round' membership offer and develop means of regular and effective engagement to include offers, special events, regular communications
- Operate from a sound financial basis aiming to deliver a surplus year on year
- Active engagement with, and creation of, a dedicated network of young members – considering how the contributions of younger members may be included in our governance structure
- Reinforce the charitable profile of the SAA in all our activities and to demonstrate the real impact of our education interventions – i.e. tell people the difference their membership is making
- Harness the skills, experience and enthusiasm of our networks to deliver more education initiatives - demonstrate to our members and volunteers the valued and effective contribution they can make
- To develop other income streams through grant funding, donations, legacies and sale of merchandise
- To be recognised as a sector leader in Suffolk and to extend our influence at national level
- To continue to celebrate best practice and innovation in food, farming and the rural economy
- To demonstrate our economic and social impact



Key Strategic Aim - Education

To provide facility/facilitation for learning about food, farming, the countryside and wider environmental issues enabling informed connection between tomorrow's consumers and the producers, and to contribute to the growth of the rural economy through inspiring particularly younger people to explore the wide range of careers the sector offers.

Key deliverables will include:

- To put education (through learning and entertainment) at the heart of the Suffolk Show building connections between the public and farmers
- To develop, with partners, a clear education strategy that targets different activities at different stages of a young person's learning
- To develop a year round learning offer for schools e.g. on-site learning in the conservation/wildlife area
- To increase engagement with secondary schools, colleges and universities
- To develop activity that inspires young people about careers at all levels of education in food and farming - bringing young people into direct contact with positive role models/ambassadors who work in the sector. Promote the pathways to higher level careers and centres of academic excellence be it locally or nationally
- Encourage the continued learning and skills development of those already working in the sector including activities that enable knowledge transfer, e.g. farmers linking with non-farmers and those involved now communicating effectively with future generations
- To engage with the STEM Ambassador* programme through our members and volunteers

*national programme using business people to act as ambassadors to support schools in delivery of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM subjects) and to raise awareness amongst young people of the high level careers available in the sector. In Suffolk, the programme is facilitated by local education charity, Connect – Education & Business



Key Strategic Aim - The Show

To continue to be a 'best in class' County Show which is relevant and appealing to a modern and increasingly urban based consumer/visitor. To also be a focal point for the 'Suffolk brand' and promotion of the cultural offer.

Key deliverables will include:

- To continue to innovate and evolve to deliver the best possible County Show experience for all our stakeholders – visiting public, members, exhibitors, sponsors
- To continue to evolve our marketing strategy to build audience and emphasise relevance – to increase our digital marketing engagement and year round PR activity
- To reinforce the charity message to all stakeholders, acknowledging support and demonstrating the difference they have made – ticket purchasers, sponsors, exhibitors etc.
- To develop 'soft' education/learning through entertainment at the Show – advising and informing our visitors about food, farming and the rural environment
- To re-inforce relevance of the Show by promoting food, farming and the countryside to increasingly less connected visitors and in the context of changing farming practises
- To add value to our members through a quality experience
- To recognise the contribution of our volunteers



Key Strategic Aim - The Estate

To manage the estate to best advantage in order to contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of the SAA, whilst enhancing the Show infrastructure and educational activities.

Key deliverables will include:

- To develop a site master plan to define future long-term use/aims and investment in key infrastructure and technologies e.g. Wi-Fi
- To remind that we are an agricultural charity through permanent signage and displays
- To generate year round income from the site to support our charitable objectives
- To explore low maintenance, low environmental impact uses for the site which generates a year round income e.g. caravan park, golf driving range
- To develop an annual site maintenance plan which ensures our grounds and built assets are always in best possible condition for the Show and for our commercial hirers
- To develop allied activities that are compatible with our charity/education objectives e.g. development of an orchard, apiary (with Suffolk Bee Keepers) to support to our conservation area as an education resource, support for start-up businesses in agriculture and allied industries



Key Strategic Aim - Commercial

To maximise commercial activity and its profitability from our event centre and outside space to support the SAA's charitable objectives:

Key deliverables will include:

- To grow market share and position as the premier conference and event venue in the East of England
- To be the 'go-to' venue for events/conferences which support/promote the wider economy
- To reinforce the SAA charity message to everyone using the event centres and outside space
- To develop our own sustainable events programme that is in line with in-house expertise, charitable objectives and market demand
- To develop other income streams through grant funding, donations, legacies and sale of merchandise



Our home – Trinity Park IP3 8UH

