

## **Chief Executives Report**

The AGM report provides the opportunities of both reflection as well as looking forward.

We are all part of an industry which is embracing unprecedented change. BIAC recognises the need to change in line with the challenges faced by members and their clients. Farmers now recognise that they are farming the environment not just the soil, for many older farmers that is a significant leap forwards with many only just coming to terms with the need to respect and enhance soil health. All of this comes at a time when there is a genuine challenge to farm support payments, not just from Government but also from members of the public. Farmers are now increasingly turning to consultants not only to provide reassurance but to radically challenge the farm model exploring all opportunities to extract income while preserving and enhancing the core asset, the farm that is the productive land, environmental areas as well as the supporting infrastructure.

In June we will have the first Executive Training Program, this builds on the very successful Foundation I and Foundation II courses. It is designed to challenge the thought process, aimed at the consultant who will be recognised in the future as a leader and an innovator. The course will be held at the RAU, Cirencester in June, 2023 and bookings will open shortly. Places will be restricted in order to ensure the quality of presentation and participation.

BIAC is not a political organisation but it is important that it has a voice in the public arena representing the interests of its members and their clients. Peter Walker and Simon Ward provide an invaluable RPA technical support service to BIAC members, David Meredith liaises with Defra on behalf of BIAC. I have revitalised the high level RPA link and have bi-monthly meetings with the RPA looking at strategic plans and opportunities. For more see the CEO Update, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2023. In addition I have promoted BIAC through the Public Policy Exchange ('PPP') working on a paper addressing 'Innovation in Agriculture', Simon Britton and I represent BIAC in The Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture ('TIAH'), a fledgling institute that has secured £20m of grant funding and is taking career progression as its initial objective. BIAC is also lending its support to the British Farm Data Council ('BFDC') which seeks to set an industry standard in the use of farm data recognising that data flow currently is primarily one-way, farmers supply a lot but get little usable data in return.

2022 saw the return of face to face conferences and we were pleased with the support received for each of the three conferences, The Welsh Conference, Business Management and Rural Planning. We have already had the 2023 Wales event and will have had the Business Management Conference by the 2023 AGM. Plans are already in place for the 2023 Rural Planning Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members who give their time to organise and run these events without whom they would not be possible. Since the 2023 Wales event I have engaged with David Ashford, Senior Engagement Lead for the Land Management Reform Division, Welsh Government and was moved to make the following comment which is key to BIAC *'conferences [are key] in the BIAC calendar as [they] bring together a broad group of participants and address a range of topics meaning that ..... all are challenged to address subjects outside of their normal sphere of work'*

The AGM is not a face to face event in 2023. We hope to revert to this in future years but feedback from members remind us that there is a significant call of their time in the current economic climate.



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A ten year review of BIAC has started and members are encouraged to participate in that exercise. Please feel free to make any suggestions. A survey has been prepared and this will be circulated shortly, your participation will be appreciated.

As ever I am indebted to Cooksley & Co for their support and assistance. Finally I would like to thank all of Council for their valued support particularly to, Simon Britton, Tony Kernon and Adrian Cannon who have worked hard in the name of BIAC over the last 12 months.

**Mike Greetham February, 2023**