



## Introduction By Shelagh Hancock, Chief Executive



**It was thought 2020 was a year like no other, full of unprecedented events. But in 2021 we seem to be here again as the world wakes up post-COVID. And yet, while practically all restrictions have been lifted, we are not post-COVID, with cases rising by the day and fearful warnings being issued by our NHS about the winter ahead.**

The demand created by coming out of restrictions has led to an unprecedented level of disruption in supply chains resulting in challenges linked to lorry driver availability and the supply of goods. This, along with a tsunami of inflation, has created a difficult and extremely challenging trading environment.

There is no doubt inflation is adding pressure on you, our members, at a farm level, throughout the supply chain and indeed on First Milk, your business. We are working tirelessly on initiatives to both mitigate these costs and, with our customers, to recover them from the marketplace so we can get returns back to farm as soon as we are able.

While current events are creating a headwind we must continue to look ahead and progress our longer-term plans.

As you know, this year we are embarking on significant capital investment works at both creameries, with a particular focus on the Lake District Creamery. Inevitably, inflationary pressure, supply chain delays and COVID disruption have made these projects more challenging, but I am pleased to say, thanks to the hard work of our team, we remain on track. At the time of writing, Haverfordwest is just finishing its shutdown and Lake District Creamery goes into shutdown in the coming weeks, which will see the switchover and commissioning of new plant, including the new blockformer room at LDC – a core part of our cheesemaking process. These projects are key to our future development, improving capacity, reliability and product quality and allowing us to leverage future growth opportunities with confidence.

Thinking of the future, with COP26 just a few days away, there is also inevitably even greater attention on the climate crisis at present. As you know, we have made bold commitments to achieving net zero by 2040, along with several transitional commitments as we work towards that goal. A key part of this is increasing carbon sequestration in soil on members’ farms, something supported by

the adoption of regenerative agriculture principles. We held a very successful round of workshops on this subject at the end of the summer, which were well attended. If you couldn’t make it to a workshop, we have published a series of short videos capturing the key points on YouTube, so if you can, take a moment to watch those. We are also asking each member to complete a regenerative farming plan in the coming months; further details will be provided in the near future.

This focus on net zero is critical, and we must all play our part. We have all witnessed climate disruption of some kind in recent years, but the science indicates urgent action is required in the rest of this decade if we are to avoid major problems in the future. With ruminant agriculture seen as part of the problem by some, working together to demonstrate grass-based dairy farming is part of the solution not the problem is essential to protect our markets.

Finally, as you know, we are soon holding our first face-to-face member meetings since before COVID struck and I am really looking forward to updating members in more detail at these events. I hope to see you there.

# Council elections

It's not too late to submit a nomination for the First Milk Member Council. The eligibility criteria allow producers who are not technically First Milk members but fully involved in a member farm to stand for election. This includes contract and tenant farmers where the landlord is a First Milk member and the grown-up children of members who are not partners in the member business.

In the forthcoming election, Scott Calderwood, Louise Davies and David Walker are due to step down. David and Louise are eligible for re-election and intend to stand again. Scott Calderwood has served the maximum three terms of office and will retire from the Council.

To find out more about being on Council, please contact a Council Member or the Council Chairman, Sean Rickard at [sean@seanrickardltd.co.uk](mailto:sean@seanrickardltd.co.uk)

Deadline  
5th  
November

## Election timeline

Dates	
5th November	Deadline for nominations and submission of CVs and candidate statement
13th December	Online voting begins and voting papers are sent to members who receive paper communications
21st January	Voting closes
Late January	Announcement of successful candidates
February-March	New Council member(s) go through induction process and attend Council meetings
1st April	New Council member(s) take office

For a nomination form, please contact [membershipteam@firstmilk.co.uk](mailto:membershipteam@firstmilk.co.uk)

"I have the privilege of chairing First Milk's Member Council. I say privilege because I am in awe of the commitment and contributions made by the farmers you elect to your Council. Your Council is at the heart of First Milk's governance structure, representing you when holding the executive to account. It works because of the Council members' experience and empathy; not only are they dairy farmers but they also share your hopes, aspirations and concerns regarding First Milk's performance. It is for this reason I urge you to exercise your right and vote in the coming Council elections. It's the best way to demonstrate your support and solidarity with those who work hard on your behalf.

Perhaps you may even have thought of further exercising your rights by standing for election to Council. Before you dismiss the thought, let me reassure you. If you run a successful dairy farm, you have the qualities to be an effective Council member. With the aid of an induction process and a development programme you will rapidly settle into what is a friendly, productive working environment. And if you



have further ambition, serving as a Council member is a proven route to becoming a First Milk farmer director. Most importantly, as a Council member, you have a unique opportunity to directly help your fellow members achieve the higher returns and greater stability deserved by hard-working dairy farmers."

Sean Rickard, Council Chairman



*“I’ve enjoyed seeing how Council works for every member, upholding the cooperative ethos of fairness for all.”*

*Scott Calderwood*



*“By being on Council, I’m excited to see how our views are sought by the Board and Exec, and how they impact the business.”*

*Alan Trainer*

## Success at International Cheese Awards

First Milk has again had great success at the International Cheese Awards, now the largest cheese show in the world with over 4000 entries. The two creameries secured a combined haul of 18 awards across all cheese types from mild to vintage Cheddar, Double Gloucester, Red Leicester and Reduced Fat Mature, plus the CHR Hansen trophy for Champion Double Gloucester. The awards comprised nine gold, three silver and six bronze.

First Milk Customer Quality Manager, Jack Eade, commented: “To have such great success at this prestigious show, with awards being gained across all our cheeses from mild to vintage and our territorial and reduced fat cheese, is a major achievement. It is testimony to the continued superb quality milk received from our members for cheese making, without which none of these awards would be possible.”

## First Milk members scoop awards

Jessica Langton was named 2021 Ag Student of the Year at this year’s Farmers Weekly Awards, the judges noting, “her desire to fill any knowledge and experience gaps through pure hard work and perseverance made her stand out.” And the very next week, Jess took out a second award at the British Farming Awards, being described as, “doing a first-class job of linking her understanding of science and academia to solving key problems within agriculture. It is evident Jessica wants to make a difference.” Jess says she was both surprised and honoured to win the awards: “I didn’t really believe I could win until I did! I hope to use these awards to encourage diversity and inclusivity in agriculture, and promote the broader areas of our industry, such as biotechnology and digital science.”

Also in the Farmers Weekly Awards, Mark Housby became 2021 Grassland Manager of the Year. Mark manages Peepy Farm and was judged to “combine all the elements of a quality grassland farm with



a major focus on soils.” First Milk director and Peepy Farm tenant, Robert Craig, said: “The award is great recognition for Mark and the team who manage the grass daily. Efficient grassland production is at the heart of our business model. As we adapt our system to be less reliant on chemical fertilizer, Mark’s enthusiasm, together with changes already implemented around sward diversity, means we’re more resilient and well placed to prosper in the future.”

# Insuring against non-collection of milk

Each year we ask members to be prepared for adverse weather, including having insurance for non-collected milk. This year we strongly advise you ensure your cover includes all eventualities resulting in the non-collection of milk. Council Member, Christine Kelsall, commented: "Many factors can come into play which mean milk is disposed of on farm. It is vital to make sure your cover is as wide as possible."

We have also reviewed our comprehensive adverse weather contingency plan in partnership with our hauliers. The aim is to ensure all First Milk sites and depots are well prepared and follow robust procedures in the event of bad weather.

To help mitigate the adverse effects of bad weather and ensure the smooth running of business, we ask all members to do the following:

- 1) **Contact:** Check First Milk has your up-to-date phone and email contact details. These are listed on the First4Milk app.
- 2) **Tanks:** Tell us about any changes to your farm tank size(s)
- 3) **Roads:** Do your best to clear farm roads of snow and ice
- 4) **Grit/salt:** Have stocks of grit/salt available to help your tanker driver
- 5) **Collections:** Contact your tanker depot if milk collections are missed
- 6) **Insurance:** Ensure you have insurance to cover any milk run to waste
- 7) **Correspondence:** Check emails, text messages and the First Milk website for bad weather alerts



## November member meetings

We are delighted to once again be able to hold face-to-face member meetings, but are also offering an online event for those unable to attend in person. Come and hear what's happening in your business; we're keen to share our plans and listen to your views. We value your input.

Dates	Time	Venue
Monday 1st November	7.30pm	Wolfscastle Country Hotel, Wolf's Castle SA62 5LZ
Monday 1st November	7.30pm	Park Hotel, Rugby Park, Kilmarnock KA1 1UR
Tuesday 2nd November	11am	Woodland House Hotel, Irongray Road, Newbridge, Dumfries, DG2 0HZ
Tuesday 2nd November	11am	Botanic Gardens, Middleton Hall, Llanarthney, Carmarthen SA32 8HG
Tuesday 2nd November	7.30pm	The Hired Lad, Agricultural Hall, Skirsgill Lane, Penrith CA11 0DN
Tuesday 2nd November	7.30pm	Lion Hotel, 24 Bridge Street, Belper DE56 1AX
Thursday 4th November	7.30pm	Click on this link: <a href="https://bit.ly/3pBKggu">https://bit.ly/3pBKggu</a> <i>*Choose 'Join using the web' option. If you have trouble connecting, please contact the IT helpdesk on 0141 847 6911.</i>

Pre-registration is not required – just come along. For more information contact the membership team on 0141 847 6800 or [membershipteam@firstmilk.co.uk](mailto:membershipteam@firstmilk.co.uk)

Reminder



Telephone: 0141 847 6800

Email: [membershipteam@firstmilk.co.uk](mailto:membershipteam@firstmilk.co.uk)

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