

**Press Release**

[31 October 2022]

**Oxford Farming Conference appoints three new Directors**

The Oxford Farming Conference (OFC), the UK’s leading agricultural, business and food event, has made three new appointments to its voluntary board of directors.

CEO of The Farming Community Network, **Jude McCann**, Head of News at Farmers Guardian, **Abi Kay**, and Project Manager (Rural) at Scottish Enterprise, **Julia Latto**, will join the committee after the next conference in January 2023.

The public recruitment process looked to attract individuals who would support the charity’s objectives to inform, challenge and inspire delegates, by developing a conference agenda that would be a force for positive change throughout the industry.

In addition, applicants were asked to demonstrate leadership qualities that would support OFC’s outreach initiatives, including its bursary and scholarship programs, supporting the next generation of farmers to attend the conference, including individuals facing social or economic barriers, and those with leadership potential.

Jude McCann grew up on a family farm in mid-Ulster, Norther Ireland, and has a strong understanding of the challenges facing agriculture, having spent seven years as CEO for Rural Support, a charity in Northern Ireland that supports farmers and their families. In 2020 he was appointed CEO with the Farming Community Network (FCN), and now works across England and Wales helping those facing hardship.

Abi Kay has won several awards for her journalism, including the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists Young Leaders accolade and the Bob Davies Memorial Award for raising the profile of Welsh farming. She has a strong background in politics, working for a rural MP in Westminster and as a lobbyist for NFU, prior to joining the Farmers Guardian team.

Julia Latto has over 25 years of experience in economic development, and leads on a wide portfolio of national programs for Scottish Enterprise, including the Scottish Rural Leadership Programme. She has presented on leadership and entrepreneurial development in rural businesses worldwide, and is a member of the International Association of Programmes for Agriculture and Rural Leaders.

Commenting on the appointments, OFC Chair Emily Norton said,

*“Agriculture is facing unpresented change, and it is vital OFC continues to be a platform for delegates to debate and discuss the challenges and opportunities ahead. Our board of directors contributes a wide range of skills and bring diverse experience, ensuring we continue to meet this objective, and deliver a conference that is fit for the future of the industry.*

*“The appointments of Jude, Abi and Julia further strengthen the board, bringing forward political, economic and specialist knowledge. They all demonstrated diversity of thought, a progressive and forward-looking outlook, an ambition for positive change, and a broad range of networks across our domestic and international countries.”*

Throughout the three year tenure, a key priority for Jude McCann will be highlighting the health and wellbeing of those that work in the industry,

*“It is an honour to be selected as a Director for the Oxford Farming Conference. My motivation to apply for the role was twofold. Firstly, as CEO of The Farming Community Network I want to ensure that the health and wellbeing of people working in the agri-sector is continually brought to the fore as we continue to tackle economic and environmental challenges.*

*“Secondly, on a personal level I am keen to push boundaries, explore opportunities and to give back to the farming community in a positive manner. I very much look forward to working with my fellow directors in the OFC, being part of one of the UK’s largest agricultural events and to work together to ensure a resilient farm sector for the future.”*

Abi Kay will look to use her experience to provide current information, so delegates can make informed decisions.

*“I am absolutely delighted to have been appointed a director of Oxford Farming Conference, an event which has long been a highlight of my year. I hope to use my political experience to ensure OFC offers farmers the best possible understanding of the major policy changes underway in the UK.”*

Driving rural business and transformational change will be core to Julia Latto’s support.

“I am honoured and delighted to be joining the team at Oxford Farming Conference as Director at a time of unprecedented change and transformation in the industry. I have been involved in rural economic development for over 27 years and over the last 17 years, have supported rural businesses to transform themselves and their businesses through the Scottish Rural Leadership Programme.

“I am passionate about helping people in the industry move forward through a lens of confidence, ambition and an entrepreneurial mindset. I am very much looking forward to utilising and sharing my knowledge, expertise and networks not only help farmers, but all rural businesses involved in the industry.”

The 2023 Oxford Farming Conference, “Farming a New Future” will take place from 4 to 6 January 2023 in Oxford. The new directors will be officially appointed to the board at the AGM, which takes place during the event.

To find out more about the programme and tickets, visit [www.ofc.org.uk](http://www.ofc.org.uk).

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**Notes to Editors:**

* For more information on the Oxford Farming Conference (OFC):

**Website:** [www.ofc.org.uk](http://www.ofc.org.uk/)

**Twitter:**[@oxfordfarming](http://www.twitter.com/oxfordfarming)

**YouTube:** [OxfordFarmingConference](https://www.youtube.com/oxfordfarmingconference%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

* The [Council](https://www.ofc.org.uk/council) is made up of 10 voluntary directors. The OFC 2023 Chair is Emily Norton.
* OFC is held annually in January over three days and includes a vibrant programme of speakers, panel sessions, politics sessions and easy networking.
* The 77th conference will take place from the 4 to 6 January 2023 in Oxford and online. A programme of fringes will also be available, online, in December 2022.
* OFC has established a reputation for strong debate and exceptional speakers.
* OFC is a charity that invests in the agricultural education and knowledge-sharing. It attracts over 650 delegates every year, including many people from the wider food chain, retail, NGOs, scientific organisations, media, policy-making bodies and governments from around the world.
* With HRH Princess Royal as its patron, OFC is a charity with a remit to educate and transfer knowledge in the agricultural sector. As part of its charitable undertakings, the OFC sponsors young people to attend the conference, to travel overseas and it seeks to develop emerging leaders.