

Professional

The Douglas
Bomford Trust



A new strategy

The Douglas Bomford Trust's outgoing secretary Alan Plom reflects on his time as Secretary and the Trust's new strategy:

During my six years as Secretary, the Trust has supported dozens of students, from A-level pupils through to PhDs - just as it has for half a century. It has been most rewarding to see them develop their confidence as well as knowledge and successfully achieve their qualifications to move on to

further studies, research or to work in the sector.

Personal development is also at the heart of the Trust's new Strategy, which charts a more proactive role for the Trust going forward. By focussing on 4 'themes', ie developing People, promoting

Collaboration, improving Communication and developing Technology, the Trust aims to play a major part in developing and promoting the role of 'engineers working in agriculture'. A description used by Charlie Nicklin.



**Developing people, promoting collaboration,
improving communication and developing technology**



The new strategy was launched at a summit in November

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New Strategy

The Trust's new Strategy was launched with a short video

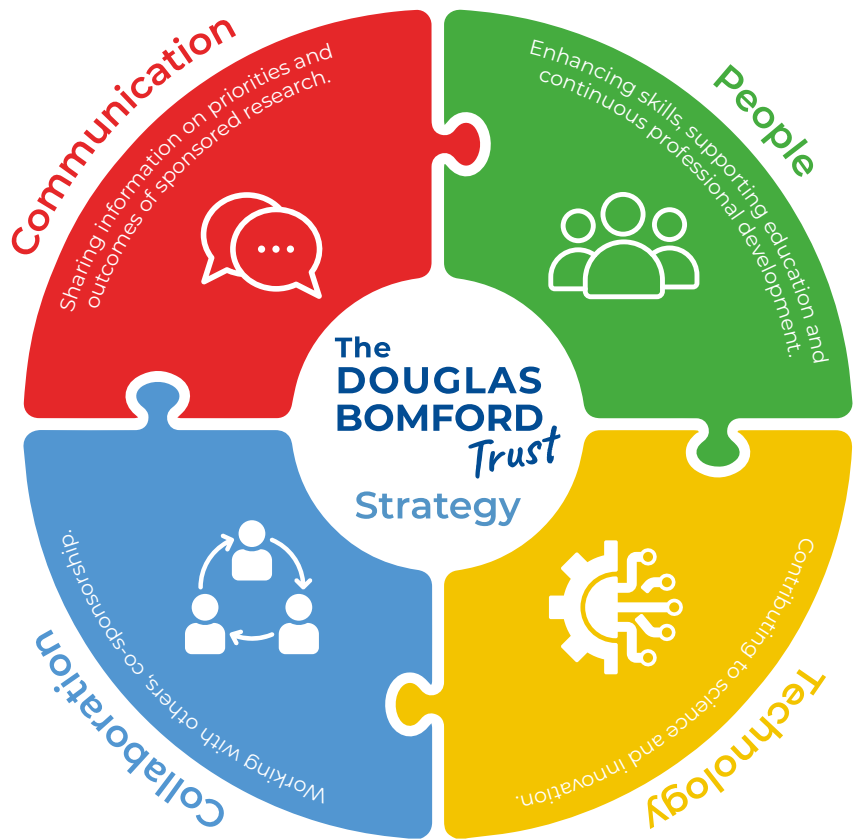
<https://youtu.be/2OMzLWMNW08>

at a 'summit' on "Delivering sustainable farming through agricultural engineering", convened by the Trust at Agri-EPI's Agri-Tech Innovation Hub.

Held during 'AgriTech Week', this unique event brought together all parts of the industry, complementing IAgRE's Landwards Conference and other events, eg run by AgTechE and Agri-EPI.

Trust Chair Nick August (an arable farmer on the Cotswolds) and Patron Dr David Llewelyn outlined the role of the Trust and purpose of the new Strategy. David highlighted education and training issues, followed by Mark Moore, (Vice-Chair and IAgRE President-elect), well-qualified as AGCO's Director of Government Affairs to summarise the national and global challenges facing the sector.

Trustee Paul Miller focussed on the task of identifying and funding relevant research, and offered some solutions, eg through collaboration. Horizon scanning research at Cranfield University, involving groups of MSc students over the past few years, has helped to give the Trust direction and the tools to develop our Strategy, and to identify priorities. Rather than being passive, up to 50% of our research funding will be allocated to developing technologies, control systems and strategies for sustainable farming, controlled environment food



production and use of energy sources (Net Zero).

A Farmer's Perspective

As Nick August explained: "It is my long-term use of technology and passion for sustainable farming systems that got me involved in the Trust. Technology which was primarily adopted to improve crop performance is now having a greater influence on sustainable farming systems and land stewardship.



Nick August

"The ag engineering landscape has dramatically changed in the 9 years or so that I have been involved with the Trust. Brexit and the war in Europe are enormous disrupters, especially to supply chains, logistics and labour supply. Pandemics, Covid 19, African swine flu, avian influenza and bovine TB have been devastating to the livestock sectors and immensely disruptive to food security too.

"The race to Net Zero, legislation, data collection and analysis, robotics, and soon AI, are all significantly influencing the direction and speed of development. This is why the Trust sought to adopt an updated strategy, to help trustees scope projects that support our core objectives through the broad arena that ag engineering has become, and to give clarity to stakeholders on those areas the Trust wants to focus on.

"We want to invest in people with ideas - ideas that advance our sector's sustainability and profitability. We want to engage

with students who are going to implement those ideas in the field, who are enthusiastic and aligned with our core values. We want to encourage collaboration with (and between) manufacturers, universities, food producers, the supply chain, and supermarkets to maximise the Trust's limited resources, both financial and trustee's time.

"I am in awe at the talent that is engaging in ag engineering and am impressed at the quality of research that is undertaken in the UK, but often disappointed at the lack of influence a lot of this knowledge has on improving farming systems and food security. Research has no value gathering dust in university archives and we need to be better at communicating (the practical findings) to the farming and food supply community.

"It is they (....me), that need to adopt better farming practice. Practices proven through research, data, and often real-world experience. In many instances that requires conveying repeatedly a simple concise unambiguous message endorsed by respected industry experts."

Workshop

During a breakout session, the 50 delegates (representing farmers, manufacturers and dealers, education and training, research and sponsors) shared their concerns and suggestions.

Recommendations relating to education and training (at all levels) and the close interdependence between developing and using new technologies, have already been passed to Defra's Independent Labour Review Team. This is just the start of the process, and the report on the event will be used to inform (and hopefully influence) other emerging Government policies.

The film, agenda, presentations and report on the event are all available on our event webpage via:

www.dbt.org.uk

Farewell.....

I envy my successor (David White, a Senior Lecturer at Harper Adams and former Trustee) who takes over as Trust Secretary from the end of November. The Summit was a great note on which to end my involvement. Fantastic opportunities lie ahead for the Trust and for 'engineers working in agriculture', but it is time for me to retire, 'gratefully'. I wish you all the very best in your endeavours.

'We want to invest in people with ideas, ideas that advance our sector's sustainability and profitability.'

For further information, see the Trust's website:

www.dbt.org.uk

or contact the Secretary Alan Plom via:

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