

PRESS RELEASE: 29 April 2020

Former NFU president takes on chairmanship of Organic Research Centre

The Organic Research Centre (ORC) is delighted to announce the appointment of former NFU president, Tim Bennett as the new chair of its Council of Management.

Tim's appointment follows the planned retirement of longstanding chair, Mike Turnbull, who has spent the past eight years both as a trustee and chair of ORC, the UK's leading independent research centre for organic food production and land management solutions.

Tim brings more than 40 years' experience in the food and farming supply chain. As well as running an organic farm in south Wales, he has served as NFU President, as chairman of DEFRA's dairy Environmental Task Force and as chair of the Food Standards Agency.

Currently, Tim is the chair of the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Livestock; working with twelve University partners and Innovate UK to invest in new applied livestock research capabilities around the UK. This investment of over £70m is the largest in new livestock applied research capacity for a generation and the successful partnership has resulted in the largest alliance of livestock researchers in Europe.

Tim comments: "It was a great honour to be asked to take over the chair of the ORC. I want to thank Mike Turnbull for his incredible efforts over the last few years on behalf of ORC and particularly over the last year in delivering the farm sale that has created the opportunity to invest funds to create a more sustainable organisation.

"I am a first-generation farmer with a mainly organic grassland farm near Carmarthen in South Wales very close to the National Botanic Garden of Wales (which is also organic). We converted to organic production 13 years ago.

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Patrons: The Duchess of Richmond and Gordon, Yvonne Pye, Christopher Bielenberg, Juliet Kindersley, Peter Kindersley and Jan Sundt. The Progressive Farming Trust Ltd, trading as the Organic Research Centre, is a charity registered in England and Wales (281276). A company limited by guarantee (1513190). Registered office: Trent Lodge, Stroud Road, Cirencester GL7 6JN.

“The ORC is implementing a robust strategy that will make our organisation even more relevant as the UK moves to a more sustainable farming future. Our business plan recognises the value of building solid partnerships that are focussed on carrying out the right research and sharing it with the relevant audiences.

“Although the Covid-19 pandemic has caused disruption throughout the whole food supply chain, one positive outcome is that this will hopefully lead to a more evidence-based debate about the future of food production in the UK. I think that the ORC will continue to be a key contributor to this debate, as part of helping to create industry solutions that are based on sound science.”

Outgoing chair, Mike Turnbull has been a consistent and steady figure, seeing the organisation through a huge amount of change, most recently its appointment of Lucy MacLennan as chief executive and the organisation’s move to Trent Lodge in Cirencester.

Having served as a trustee for a succession of charities for the past 22 years, 18 as a chair, Mike contemplates the future and reflects on his input at ORC. “I am looking forward to having a rest. I am eagerly anticipating being able to spend more time with my family, particularly my grandchildren.

“At the ORC, we have come through some challenging times together, and following the recent changes, I am confident that the organisation is well placed now to make its much deserved breakthrough into the wider national consciousness as a leading player in the UK and indeed international organic scene.”

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Notes to editors:

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The Organic Research Centre (ORC) is the UK’s leading independent organic research organisation. Established in 1980, the charity has played a central role in the development of organic food and farming research, knowledge exchange, policy and standard setting. We:

- Research and develop practical, sustainable land management and food production systems

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- Foster knowledge exchange between researchers, producers, food businesses and related professionals
- Influence policy and public debates on the future of food and farming based on sound evidence.

Following a strategic review, the ORC has moved from its previous site near Newbury to locate alongside the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester. The new address is Trent Lodge, Stroud Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 6JN.

<http://www.organicresearchcentre.com/>

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