

# Cross-Party Group on Rural Policy

Tuesday 8th March 6-7:30pm

Supporting Scotland's Young Rural Entrepreneurs

## Present

### MSPs

Emma Harper MSP  
Edward Mountain MSP  
Finlay Carson MSP  
Rhoda Grant MSP  
Colin Smyth MSP  
Jenni Minto MSP

### Speakers

Elen Hughes - Llwyddo'n Lleol project  
Jade Owen - Llwyddo'n Lleol project  
Rachel Parker – The Frangipane Bakery, Eyemouth  
Emily Armstrong – Balemartine Fold, Tiree  
Teresa Cadogan – Cape Clear, Ireland  
Rebecca Dawes – Rural Youth Project

### Attendees

Abigail Williams	SRUC
Alexa Green	SRUC
Alison Barclay	Orkney Islands LEADER
Alistair Prior	European Network for Rural Development
Ann MacSween	Historic Environment Scotland
Anna Fraser	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Anne Hastie	Tyne Esk LEADER
Anne McNeill	A Heart for Duns Development Trust
Barrai Hennebry	Munster Technological University/SRUC

Carol Langston	SRUC
Catharine Idle	Fife LEADER
Ceri Ritchie	SAC Consulting
Patricia Clark	Scottish Parliament
Marcus Craigie	University of Aberdeen
David Miller	James Hutton Institute
David Nicholson	Musician
Felipe dos Anjos Cardoso	
Helen McGuirk	
Hilary Stubbs	MACS
Jackie Brierton	GrowBiz
Jade Owen	Project Officer Llwyddo'n Lleol
Jane Atterton	SRUC
Jayne Glass	SRUC
Katy Ewing	Southern Uplands Partnership
Kit Carruthers	Ninefold Distillery
Liz Barron-Majerik	Lantra
Nick Wright	Nick Wright Planning
Penny Montgomerie	Scottish Young Farmers Clubs
Rachel Creaney	James Hutton Institute
Roger Turner	Rural Economies Consultant
Sam Foster	Rural Housing Scotland
Douglas Scott	Scottish Borders Council
Tara Bolland	South of Scotland Enterprise
Wendy Barrie	Scottish Food Guide

## Apologies

David Cameron	Community Land Scotland
David Gass	Rural Matters
David Henderson Howat	Care Farming Scotland
Davy McCracken	SRUC
Geoff Simm	University of Edinburgh
James MacKessack- Leitch	Scottish Land Commission
Karen Dobbie	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Paul Richardson	Scottish Land & Estates
Peter Ross	Dumfries and Galloway LEADER
Sara Bradley	University of the Highlands and Islands
Stan Green	The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA)
Steven Thomson	SRUC

## Agenda item 1

### **Welcome, introductions and apologies**

Emma Harper MSP (chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

She noted the MSPs in attendance and MSP apologies.

It was noted that all participants had been emailed the agenda and the list of attendees and that the Rural Policy Centre (RPC) as Secretariat has a note of all apologies received and would list them in the meeting minutes as usual. It was mentioned that the meeting would be recorded.

It was reiterated that speakers' presentations would be uploaded to the CPG webpage within the RPC website as soon as possible after the meeting along with the unapproved minutes.

Group members were encouraged to send the RPC an email if amendments were required in the minutes. The minutes will be formally approved at the next meeting in June. It was noted that the Secretariat will include any action points, links etc. in the meeting minutes.

## Agenda item 2

### **Approval of minutes and recap of action items**

Emma Harper MSP reiterated that there would be a separate meeting with herself, the Secretariat and Edward Mountain MSP to discuss topics for future CPG meetings. Attendees were encouraged to contact the Secretariat with ideas for topics/speakers.

Emma Harper MSP noted that the Secretariat wrote to Francesca Osowska, CEO of NatureScot as agreed at the last meeting to highlight to her the key issues raised in our discussion at the December meeting. We have not yet had a response from her but we did ask for one so hopefully that will come through in due course. Once a response is received it will be available for CPG members to review also.

Emma Harper MSP noted that all of the speakers are women entrepreneurs and that today is International Women's Day.

Emma Harper MSP motioned to approve minutes of the previous meeting. Minutes were approved and action items agreed.

## Agenda item 3

### **Presentations and discussion**

Four speakers from Ireland, Wales, and Scotland presented on the theme of sustainable rural tourism post-pandemic.

- **Elen Hughes and Jade Owen**, Rural Wales, Llwyddo'n Lleol 2050 (Succeeding Locally)
  - The Llwyddo'n Lleol 2050 project aims to support young Welsh speaking people who are thinking of planting roots in their local community through starting up their own businesses.
  - This project aims to have an honest conversation about life in rural Wales and combat the issue of young people leaving by giving them the opportunity to understand the potential for opening their own business and then share information about their experiences, i.e. 'make more noise' around these case studies.
  - The project is both a scheme to offer support and to challenge the myth that to succeed young people must leave their rural communities. Providing opportunities for local young people to ensure long-term support. This initiative is supported by LEADER.
  - The project offers a 10-week business training programme and £1,000 of financial assistance to help them develop their own business idea. Over the past two years businesses from across various industries have been supported by this project.
  - Part of the essential element of this project is for the entrepreneurs to showcase their journey through social media platforms.
  - Examples of different entrepreneurs who have benefited from the scheme were mentioned including Tom who started a mobile smoothie business and Alaw who started a mobile gin bar.
  - The programme has brought great value to the young people who developed their business ideas but has also allowed them to embrace their local area and culture. They have found great value in sharing stories through social media.
- **Rachel Parker**, Scottish Borders, The Frangipane Bakery
  - The Frangipane Bakery is a gluten-free bakery which aims to enable all people to enjoy baked goods and offer employment support for disabled people. This project is inspired by Rachel's own gluten intolerance and autism diagnosis. She wanted to share the excitement of access to gluten-free desserts and provide opportunities for employment to those with autism.
  - Frangipane Bakery would have been in longer standing but Rachel experienced challenges during starting up the business due to lack of housing availability where she originally had her business set up. After winning the Businesses Ideas competition she was able to regain the confidence to start up her business.
  - Support from further and higher education and other business support has helped to move the process of setting up the bakery along. Rachel mentioned that general business support, and specialised one-to-one support for business owners experiencing challenges such as autism, should be offered more widely.
  - The Young Innovators Award living allowance has helped Rachel reduce her hours in paid work and given her time to dedicate to her health and business.
  - Business support should be individualised, inclusive, and specific to young-people outwith college/university business competitions.

- General support for rural communities through housing and volunteering/community opportunities should be further supported.
- Current barriers to launching Frangipane Bakery include identifying suitable premises for business location and public transport access to the business.
- **Emily Armstrong**, Isle of Tiree, Highland Cattle Business Balemartine Fold
  - Emily moved to Tiree with her family to a croft. She carried on the Highland cattle business after her father passed away.
  - The biggest challenge has been starting the business up herself without support from her father. However, support from other Highland cattle businesses and government grants have gone a long way.
  - Balemartine Fold was established in 2008. The quality of stock has improved since she has been managing the cattle herself. Establishing herself as a legitimate breeder has been difficult, but she has built up a reputation and won several young handler awards including Reserve Overall Female Champion. She has sold cattle across the UK and internationally.
  - Her aim is to start her own tourism business alongside the farm where people can visit the farm and groom the Highland cows themselves.
  - One of the main issues with living on the Isle of Tiree is the high cost of travel and transporting goods to and from the island. Lack of funding to travel makes it difficult for her to expand the business. She suggested that locals from the Hebrides should be supported in their travel expenses and be given a special rate that is less expensive than tourists' rates.
- **Treasa Cadogan**, Cape Clear, Ireland, Local Farmers Market
  - Treasa got the idea to set up a local farmers market after she attended the Rural Youth Project Ideas Festival in 2019.
  - She realised that there were lots of island products available but nowhere to buy island only products. During/after the pandemic, access to good local products has become more necessary.
  - Market research revealed a keen interest in this endeavour. In the Summer of 2020 the farmers market was launched with 10 different stalls and multiple types of goods. Everything that was sold was produced or made on the island. This project highlighted the sustainability of local food systems considering 2021 was UN's year of sustainable food systems.
  - The farmers market at this point runs itself. The local development officer has been a major support system. The support from them has been so crucial.
  - Treasa suggested having a focal point for young people to go to for support. Treasa is now in the process of setting up a rural support forum for young people to socialise and share ideas.
  - Treasa has joined her local development co-op which has been a great source of support in finding grants and maintaining island infrastructure. They are the most age diverse co-op development in Ireland.
  - In general, Treasa found that transport, housing, resistance to new ideas, and population decrease are barriers to success.

- **Rebecca Dawes, Director of the Rural Youth Project**
  - The Project was launched in 2018 to support young people who live in rural areas. The project has had nearly 1700 young people engage through research or events.
  - Infrastructure challenges are a key message from their research – access to transport, buildings for businesses, housing, and broadband have all had negative impact on young people who are keen to start a business.
  - Lack of confidence and belief is something that is a fundamental problem for young people to start their businesses. One problem with instilling and building confidence is that these things take time to establish.
  - The support network could benefit from younger people who advise other young entrepreneurs. It is important to encourage young people to approach issues in creative ways through brainstorming.
  - Creative methods for networking and support are also important. Ideas festivals have been held in rural areas to allow young people to share their thoughts in safe and open places. These festivals have been able to develop untapped potential.
  - 45 per cent of young people said it was difficult to get work where they were living and that it felt daunting to seek support therefore connection and access to support groups needs to improve. They also found that the average earnings of people in rural areas was less than those of their peers in urban areas.
  - Only 13 per cent of young people felt they had a say in their rural community and therefore most young people were reluctant to set up businesses. Connection with younger peers has been valuable in changing that perception.
  - In 2021 the Rural Youth Project released a [manifesto](#) which was read aloud for the group.
  - Rebecca discussed the Rural Youth Hackathon Events to help communities look differently at their rural regions and come up with unique ways of improving rural issues.

Key issues raised in the discussion included:

- **Question raised about current rural enterprise support:** Finlay Carson MSP raised a question about the level of support for business expansion in the case of bringing additional people on to help start-ups get to the next level. Rebecca mentioned that organisations like GrowBiz provide continued support. She noted that better connections between organisations who do provide this support and entrepreneurs who need it would be helpful. Rachel mentioned that she is hopeful that the relationships she's made through her awards will help her get to the stage where she can grow her business.
- **Connections for Rachel:** Wendy is the chairperson of the Baxter's trust and wanted to raise to Rachel that they have funds available to good baking causes and may be able to offer support.
- **Barriers faced by speakers because they are young and women:** Colin Smyth MSP asked if any of the speakers faced barriers to starting up their businesses because they were young and women. Rachel explained that one of her difficulties with trying to be a social enterprise was that she needed fellow

directors to apply for grant funding. She didn't know who to have or where to find them and this was partially from a lack of experience and contacts. She has managed to find directors through her volunteering opportunities. It is helpful having their experience but difficult to find these people. Treasa found that her biggest challenges were getting around strong opinions of rural people who maybe did not support her idea and how to speak with people who had very strong ideas. The idea of mentorship is very important.

- ***Raising the volume of the good work going on by young people not in higher education or with additional challenges:*** Jane Atterton thanked all the presenters and asked how we can ensure that we raise the volume of the good work that is going on with those young people who are not being reached through higher education and more formal routes. Jade mentioned that trying to reach various people is challenging which is why having a social media campaign is useful. Covid-19 has been difficult for community outreach. The goal is to go into the community to reach more young people through events. Emma Harper MSP proposed involving Rebecca in sharing the entrepreneurial ventures with people in South West Scotland.
- ***Ensuring people are connected with where their food is produced:*** Emma Harper MSP brought up the idea of connecting people with local food to show the value of local food production. Emily has focused recently on selling her own beef on the island. The meat is butchered on Mull and it stays locally and is sold successfully. Treasa mentioned that shopping local was helpful for both the environment and the economy. Local restaurants realised that there were vegetables and meat being produced on the island and now only source locally.
- ***Other comments:*** Further connections for some of the speakers were made. Jackie Brierton mentioned that she would raise these issues at the Rural Stakeholder Group Meeting. She also mentioned that GrowBiz can provide up to £1000 for any young entrepreneur starting up in Perth and Kinross in the next 6-9 months.

## Agenda item 4

### **Actions from this meeting are:**

- Emma Harper MSP mentioned that it could be helpful to connect the speakers to the Women in Enterprise Cross Party Group because it overlaps with the topics discussed in this meeting. Action for Secretariat to write to this Group's Secretariat once the minutes and presentation recordings are available.

## AOB

- The Secretariat (Abi Williams) mentioned that they have been working with their Communications colleagues within SRUC to find the best way to update our CPG mailing list in line with GDPR regulations. Look out for an email coming from us on this shortly.
- We promised at our first meeting in October to provide a brief update for you on the work of Scotland's Climate Assembly at this meeting. Abi briefly read



the update from the Scottish Climate Assembly for attendees, and this update is included in full below:

*“On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March three members of Scotland’s Climate Assembly, Ellie, Lewis and Joan, spoke to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee about the [Scottish Government’s response](#) to the [Assembly’s report](#) and their hopes for the future. The members reflected on the statement they issued after Weekend 8 in which they commended the Scottish Parliament for establishing the Assembly and the Scottish Government for providing a considered response. It recognises that the Scottish Government has taken some positive steps to tackle the climate emergency, however, overall the Assembly was disappointed with the level of ambition and urgency in the response to their recommendations and the statement highlights specific areas where they felt Government could go further. The Assembly remain committed to an ongoing dialogue with Government, calling for an annual review and for a scorecard for Scotland to be published bi-annually.*

*In the afternoon Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Michael Matheson MSP gave a statement to the Scottish Parliament to update them on Scotland’s Climate Assembly. In his Statement the Cabinet Secretary thanked the Assembly members and the Climate Investigators for their work and highlighted that the Scottish Government supported the vast majority of the Assembly’s recommendations. He highlighted a number of key areas where the Scottish Government are taking further action in response to the Assembly’s recommendations including the creation of a network of sharing libraries, strengthening the ‘Learning for Sustainability’ action plan, committing to a feasibility study to investigate food carbon labelling and increasing the annual target for native woodland creation from 3,000 to at least 4,000 hectares per year.”*

- Emma Harper MSP noted that Regional Land Use Partnerships were suggested as an idea for future CPG topics.

Emma Harper MSP concluded the meeting by thanking the speakers, the audience, and the MSPs for their attendance and contributions.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday 7th June 2022 – more information to follow**