

# Cross-Party Group on Rural Policy

Tuesday 8th March 6-7:30pm

## Present

### MSPs

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

### Speakers

Elen Hughes - project  
Jade Owen - project  
Rachel Parker The Frangipane Bakery, Eyemouth  
Emily Armstrong Balemartine Fold, Tiree  
Treaasa 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



## 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

# Agenda item 1

**Welcome, introductions and apologies**

**Elen Hughes and Jade Owen,**  
(Succeeding Locally)

- 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

**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 ar 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 7(h)-6(a)/d systems.

**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:***

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.



