

## Claire Wilson

Age: 26

Location: Crawford, Scotland

@ClaireWilsonArt

### Main Challenges



Limited access to creative spaces



WiFi Connectivity

### Rural Youth Project Involvement

Claire is new to the Rural Youth Project in 2020. She has always lived rurally and also been involved in her local young farmers club in Biggar. She loves supporting other local businesses.

“If you have a good idea that other people like, then it will go miles.”

- Claire Wilson



Image: Rural Youth Project

### Background

A true country bumpkin at heart, Claire Wilson has combined her passion for farming and drawing into a successful rural business.

Claire’s roots go back to a small village called Broughton in Peeblesshire, where her family still live. Growing up in the Scottish farming industry developed Claire’s love for livestock and other animals, resulting in her graduating from SRUC with a Higher National Diploma in Agriculture in 2014. She now lives at Castle Crawford Farm, in Crawford, just outside Biggar with her partner James, who is a shepherd.

“It’s so nice to live on a farm in my adult years, as I was brought up in a little rural village, but my grandads farm was just a walk over the hill and I was never away from the place growing up. My brother and I loved helping after school, weekends and holidays, especially during lambing time. It is very much a farming family affair and I will always want to live in a rural area,” she says.

“Whilst studying at SRUC, I was genuinely a ‘country comes to town’ girl. On nights out, I had to take a minute to stop and soak in what was actually going on. Catching trains or going out clubbing was very different to a walk down the village to our local Bistro!”

With Claire’s grandad, father and brother all being heavily involved in sheep shearing, she has naturally developed the same love of sheep and is currently working with a livestock genetics company, AB Europe, as an embryologist for her sixth season.

“When I first got the job with AB Europe, I was instructed to travel by myself to Belfast via the boat. Coming from a quiet rural area, this was personally a huge deal, as I had never done the likes before, but it was so good for me.

## Background

It made me much more outgoing and really opened up my eyes to life out with my wee countryside village. Within the next 5 months I had been up to Orkney and over to Lewis too, so come the following season my confidence had rocketed. ”

Now a keen jetsetter, Claire has travelled and worked all over the world, including Norway and New Zealand, where she worked as a wool handler for sheep shearers. A highlight was winning the Novice Full-Wool, Wool handling Competition, making her the first person in the Northern Hemisphere to win a Golden Shears wool handling title, and it was Scotland’s first Golden Shears title since 1990.

“Working in the shearing industry is in my blood and I really enjoyed my experience travelling with it. Needless to say I am always keen to do more. Everyone within that industry is so welcoming.”

Claire’s passion for sheep is what inspired her to start up Claire Wilson Art. Despite gaining an A in her Practical Art and Design exam at school and being encouraged to apply to creative university courses, she could never picture herself in the creative industries.

“It never crossed my mind to go down the artistic route because I wanted to do something outside on the farm, I guess I always thought I’d end up shepherding, as I just loved it. Then during Summer 2012 we were rained off from shearing, so I picked up a ‘blackie’ [Scotch Blackface sheep] journal and started sketching a tup, as I loved the shine and detail on his horn.

“After my grandad saw it, he started showing his friends, who then began asking for drawings, which led to a steady flow of commissions. The whole journey all literally started from picking up that journal on that rainy day.”

Since 2016, Claire’s ideas and enthusiasm for drawing Scottish Blackface sheep, led her to start her very own business, producing fine art prints, gifts and homewares.

“April 2016 was when I officially started my business ‘Claire Wilson Art’. I realised I was making enough money with commissions and knew I wanted to try an alternative route and create merchandise over that coming summer.



“I’m a  
country girl  
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Image: Rural Youth Project

“Starting a Facebook business page was the best thing I ever did to excel my business, essentially it’s what started it all for me.”

- Claire Wilson

## Background

“Every year since, I’ve introduced more merchandise with new designs and next up I’m hoping to bring out a fabric line. I have a list as long as my arm of products that I want to create. Time is the biggest enemy unfortunately.”

One business challenge Claire has found is poor rural internet connectivity.

“Although the Wi-Fi is much better now, it took so long to create my website,” she adds. WIX, the website creation tool Claire used, relies on Wi-Fi to edit the website. “You really do need good connectivity to keep everything going, especially with running an online shop.”

Claire says that she feels extremely lucky to live in a spacious farmhouse where she has a stock and a drawing room; she admits there are very few local spaces available if she did ever want a studio or shop.


“There definitely needs to be more creative rural spaces for young people keen to set up businesses, however you need to make sure that you’re making enough profit to cover the overheads.”

She adds that finding an area that you know will be successful, with plenty of passing trade is vital, as is encouraging the support of local businesses, especially during the pandemic.”

For now, Claire will combine her work with AB Europe and expanding ‘Claire Wilson Art’, as well as launching her new children’s story books: ‘Alfie’s Farming Adventures’ in 2021. She hopes to continue living rurally, where she can step out of her front door and be inspired by the countryside around her.

“It’s so nice to think that when I settle and have children that I could have my own business and work at home doing something that I love. If you are really passionate about something and want to make it happen, it doesn’t matter what it is, just work hard and it will happen.”

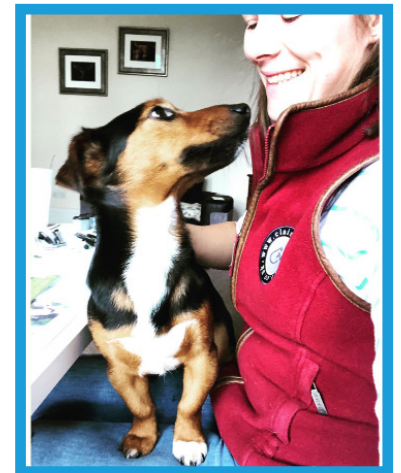
**To find out more about Claire Wilson Art, visit [www.clairewilsonart.co.uk](http://www.clairewilsonart.co.uk) or visit the below social pages:**

 **Facebook:** ‘Claire Wilson Art’ [www.facebook.com/clairewilsonart](http://www.facebook.com/clairewilsonart)

 **Instagram:** @clairewilsonart.1

## Solutions

1. Find creative spaces that have passing traffic to ensure enough customers visit the shop, in order to cover overheads e.g. renting a studio or shop.
2. Embrace social media. Set up a business page and share all that you do. Create content that people love to see. Living rurally, you need to be unique, stand out from the crowd but supporting other businesses is crucial too, it’s never a competition.



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