

ENGINE Exchange Programme

Location: Scotland and Småland, Sweden

Age: Aimed at 18 - 25 years

Main Challenges



Work, learning and social opportunities



Social Isolation

Rural Youth Project Involvement

The Rural Youth Project welcomed three members of the Swedish ENGINE programme to the 2019 Ideas Festival.

“It was about engaging with young people who would like to live and work in rural area – setting them up to connect with each other”

- Dave Tollick



Image: Angus LEADER

Background

The ENGINE Exchange is a European LEADER funded project between Smaland in Sweden and a partnership between Angus, Perth and Kinross and Fife LEADER programmes.

Fundamentally it is a work exchange aimed at young people aged 18 – 25 years in Scotland and Sweden. It includes 10-day work experience placement in Sweden for 15 young people, whilst hosting 10 young people from Sweden in Scotland.

Enormous credit must go to Rural Skills Scotland (RSS), the contractor appointed by LEADER who delivered all the engagement with the young people and the logistics of securing placements and hosts, working in both Scotland and in Sweden

The aim of the program is to create ‘transnational communities’, united in their desire to live and work rurally, and to combat some of the challenges the rural youth face, like social isolation. The ENGINE Project aims to broaden the perspectives and horizons of the young people engaged; not only giving them an eye into how others live in different rural areas and developing their understanding of rural development, community and enterprise in a different country, but enabling key life experiences that some have not previously accessed.

“It was about engaging with young people who would like to live and work in rural area – setting them up to connect with each other,” said David Tollick, Angus LEADER Coordinator.

The young people selected were not all in rural professions in Scotland – although predominantly forestry, arboriculture, and horticulture roles, others worked rurally in youth-work, design, fashion or care.

These young individuals came together with a group of entirely new people from their local geographical area. – the Scottish group included young people from Angus, as well as Perth & Kinross and Fife, who are partner LEADER Local Action Groups for this initiative.



Image: Rural Youth Project

“They were very engaging people who had a great time opening their eyes and building a sense of community with one another.”

- Dave Tollick

Background

The group met four times in Scotland allowing for the chance to get to know one another, learn about the LEADER program and finalise travel logistics. For a couple of young people, this was the first time they had been on a plane, for others – the first time they had left Scotland

“This was pretty major stuff for some of them,” said David Tollick. On arrival in Sweden the group stayed together for three days with Swedish hosts whose task was to provide an introduction and orientation to the social and cultural context of the rural work they would be undertaking and the area that they would be living in.

The young people were then dispersed into different work placements across (district/area of Sweden) that they had previously selected – some were in pairs and small groups, others on their own. Some of these placements were very similar to the roles they held at home; others required learning a completely new skill set. During this time, they stayed with Swedish host families experiencing full cultural immersion.

The group came back together for reflection and debrief with the Swedish group hosts for 2 days – giving them an opportunity to exchange stories and compare experiences, as well as discuss their observations and reflecting on the program.

“[The young people] drew a lot of distinctions between their work environment in Scotland and what they saw in Sweden.”

Returning to Scotland, the group had one final chance to come together formally with RSS and the Scottish LEADER staff. The young people were given a platform to feed back their ideas to help shape the program for others in the future.

One of the biggest successes of The ENGINE project, is the fact that the young people themselves have chosen to stay in contact as friends; “It built a community between people of that age group who didn’t really have the ‘I want to live and work in a rural area’ kind of community to engage with previously”.

Upon their return, all the young people reflected in a survey that the exchange had enhanced their personal development significantly. The role the exchange has had in building self-confidence, resilience and independence is undoubtable. For some, it has significantly increased their skill set and future employability and for others, it has opened up a completely new life path– with one young person now committing to extended work experience there.

Solutions

1. Broaden horizons and confidence through independent travel and immersive experience in a different cultural setting
2. Develop a new community of young people with similar interests and aspirations
3. Enhance rural skill set through exposure to varied work in different settings




We’re social!

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