

Ella Mcleister

Age: 22

Location: Selkirk, Scotland

 @gracemvmnt

Main Challenges



Transport



Enterprise



Employment

Background

Ella, originally from the Scottish Borders has returned home to live and work in Selkirk, after studying for two years in Sydney, Australia. She is now currently working as a freelance photographer and stylist.

“When I came back from Sydney, I wasn’t exactly sure what I was going to do. I initially was looking to move to a city but now that I am home, I have ended up staying much longer than expected.

Since returning to Selkirk, Ella has found it very insightful to see what working as a freelancer in a rural area is like.

“Although a lot of creative work is based in the city, there are less people working in this industry around here, which has certainly been a positive for me.”

During her time in Sydney, Ella started her own project, ‘Grace Movement’; a platform focused on encouraging and inspiring women and girls, with an anti-bullying focus.

“During high school, I struggled to find where I fitted in, and especially found it difficult to navigate friendships with girls. So, the idea stemmed from that, which then lead to a focus on anti-bullying.

This has always been a passion of mine. I really wanted to start a conversation about what actually goes on sometimes in high schools and that it is important to encourage one and other to have a collective voice.”

With Ella’s freelance work mainly involving product photography, which she can do from home, she has found that transport does hinder opportunities outside her local area.

“With the nature of the work that I do, a lot of it is last minute. I could receive an email asking to assist at a shoot next week, but I can’t get there on time because it is often in Manchester or London. It is frustrating working in an industry, where you are not always able to be in the hub of it all.”



“If you want to do something creative and your struggling in a smaller place, then be really pro-active”

- Ella Mcleister





“It is not true that you need to live in a city to be where it is all happening. I think you can work on what you love despite where you live. Just enjoy the benefits of wherever you may be.”

- Ella Mcleister

Background

Despite this frustration, Ella believes that living rurally has made her work harder and has allowed her to build a reputation for herself more quickly.

“Having the Herriot Watt University campus here, has really helped the boost the Borders’ creativity and especially helped younger people figure out what creative route they want to pursue. The university has certainly inspired a lot of people in the area.

However, Ella admits that it was challenging during high school, as there were very few options to study creative subjects within the school curriculum.

“I think I would have flourished a lot more during school, had there been photography or more creative subjects available, rather than being pushed into an academic box.

“It’s the perfect place to live if you are interested in agriculture, because there are multiple job opportunities for that but finding something else can be hard and can really hinder people.”

In terms of the community, Ella describes it to be very ‘close knit’ and somewhere that she loved growing up. However, has noticed that fewer people are staying here, due to limited opportunities.

“You can’t be spontaneous and just plan things suddenly when transportation links aren’t great. You need to plan in advance, compared to living in a city. Before I passed my driving test, I was totally reliant on my parents to get me anywhere.”

However, looking to the future, the local town aims to be more diverse in bridging the gap between younger and older generations. Since moving back to Selkirk, Ella has seen a great deal of her friends moving back also, which she finds encouraging.

“A massive plus of living here is house prices, as in cities you can pay such a large sum for such a small space. Whereas here, it appeals to younger people being able to afford a bigger space and have the opportunity to renovate it as they please.”

As a young entrepreneur herself, Ella believes that having more space available within the community would greatly encourage enterprise and start up businesses to come to the area.

“It would be really cool to have a creative community hub, for all ages, which runs things like a photography club.

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Solutions

1. Transport: More frequent public transport services, would help to plan last minute trips.
2. Enterprise: Ella believes that the close by Herriot Watt University campus, has boosted creativity in her local area. She feels that more creative spaces, such as a ‘creative hub’ which holds photography clubs for example, could encourage more young people to live and work in the area.
3. Employment: A lack of entrepreneurial space, is something that Ella has noticed in her area. More spaces available would encourage start up businesses to set up in the local area and as a result increase employability opportunities.



Rural Youth Project Focus

Ella is new to the Rural Youth Project in 2020.

Since moving back to her childhood rural area, she is passionate about continuing to work and live here. She looks forward to finding out how the Rural Youth project can help her business progress in the future.

