

Esther Edwards

Location: Tunbridge Wells, Kent, South-East England



Hopes for the Future



Get hands on experience in agriculture



To get involved in local rural communities



To see grammar schools promote the wide range of careers

Rural Youth Project Involvement

A family friend shared the Kent & Medway ideas hack on LinkedIn and Esther was keen to get involved.

Background

From an early age, Esther Edwards has always been interested in agriculture. However, partly due to her parents fear of the unknown she decided to stick in at school and get her A levels before going on to graduate from the University of Bath in 2020 with a degree in International Development & Economics.

During her time at university, Esther completed a placement year with DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) working on Future Farming research as a result of Brexit. Her role was to find out via interviews and focus groups what farmers wanted from any potential trade deal. This placement opened her eyes to different opportunities and even now working in accountancy she hopes eventually to move into agricultural accounting.

A family friend of Esther shared the Rural Youth Project Ideas Hack on LinkedIn which she was keen to get involved with and glad that she went. Before the event she felt opportunities were limited for someone not from a rural background.

"I was really humbled and inspired to see people my own age doing what I'd consider the unattainable. I was able to see first-hand the support available, sometimes coming from outside the sector it can feel like you're not wanted, due to a lack of knowledge/background, but actually people are really keen to have you."

Esther left the event educated on the sheer number of opportunities available in the fresh food sector and the people ready and willing to welcome people into agriculture even without practical experience there is so many varied options out there. The hack idea favoured the most by Esther was the opportunity to adopt a 'Smart Clachan' Model to provide community led housing and attract more young people to the area while combatting isolating and instilling a sense of community.



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- Esther Edwards

Background

Housing is a massive issue and rent particularly in the South East is extortionate, it can be easier to afford in rural areas but then poor public transport links are a real problem. Housing needs to be prioritised in rural areas.”

Having now moved to Bath, Esther would like to get involved in local rural communities and in what she described as a ‘pipe dream’ get more hands-on experience in farming. Her advice to herself aged 25 is - “It’s not too late, people would be keen to have you” but she is eager to test the waters in agriculture before taking the plunge into a career.

For Kent, Esther would love to see grammar schools promote the sector and the range of careers in a positive light. Even promoting careers in finance or marketing but targeting specifically the agricultural sector she thinks would provide a better education of opportunities.

“Parents obviously want the best for their children, and it is hard to support them going into the unknown but with increased accessibility via work experience I think it would really help bring new people into the sector. Growing up I only knew of fruit picking jobs but at 16 with poor public transport, it’s not actually possible.”

Solutions

1. Before committing to a career change, Esther would like to get hands on experience in agriculture to see if it is right for her.
2. Having recently moved, Esther is excited to get involved in the rural communities around her.
3. Esther feels that due to academic segregation in Kent, agricultural careers aren’t fairly promoted.



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