

ISSUE 1

RURAL LOOP

SMILES ALL ROUND:

The project that
is putting rural youth
first

ANNA LAMOTTE:

Creating a unique
rural business
on top of a
hill

THE RURAL YOUTH PROJECT

CONNECTING. INSPIRING. CHANGING





A team of vibrant rural and agricultural communicators

Inspiring to work with and well connected.
We believe in the power of strong stories,
well told, and great ideas well delivered.

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A LETTER FROM THE *EDITOR*

“Young people are the lifeblood of rural communities”

A quote from Jane Craigie, Director of the Rural Youth Project and one that I could not agree with more.

Growing up as a farmer's daughter at the most Southerly Point in Scotland, I am no stranger to rural life. Despite getting two buses to school every day and having to walk up the closest hill to send a text; for me this will always be home.

Together with the Rural Youth Project, I welcome you to Rural Loop Magazine. A publication aiming to connect rural youth and provide a platform where their stories can be shared.

This debut issue includes a range of young people who all share the same goal: To create vibrant, sustainable futures in rural areas.

Whether it's finding out about island life, what the future of rural housing looks like or why communication is key to success; I hope the following pages inspire you.

Creating this magazine has not only allowed me to interview incredible people but to build my own relationship with the Rural Youth Project. A project at the very heart of Rural Loop.

With thanks to all involved.

Yours Sincerely
Laura McCulloch.

BACKGROUND TO RYP

This research-based project aims to develop feasible strategies to facilitate the involvement of young people in agricultural and rural activity by better understanding their current situation, aspirations, opportunities and challenges.

The project is engaging with 18 to 28-year-olds in, or brought up in, rural places throughout Scotland and the UK, as well as in Australia, Canada, Sweden and USA to draw comparisons and share learnings. The Rural Youth Project has three key elements: an online survey, a series of vloggers from around the world and a Rural Youth Ideas Festival, all of which will contribute towards the research.



To get involved with the Rural Youth Project contact:
hello@ruralyouthproject.com



CONNECTING INSPIRING CHANGING

The first Rural Youth Project Ideas Festival in 2018
Image: Craig Stephen



"The best people to talk
about the future of rural
youth are you,
the young people."

Jane Craigie:
Director of the Rural Youth Project

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'MEATING'

SHETLAND'S CHALLENGES

HEAD ON!

Jakob Eunson from Shetland shares his entrepreneurial story and the challenges he faces farming 110 miles from Scotland's mainland

Located in the most Northerly point of the British Isles, Shetland's aqua blue seas wouldn't sit out of place in a more southern latitude.

Among its treeless landscapes and dramatic coastlines, exists a deeper sense of belonging to 22 year old Jakob Eunson.

"Unless something was to drastically happen, Shetland will always be my home," says Jakob.

Born and bred on this remote island, he caught the farming bug from a young age and now runs an organic enterprise alongside his father, rearing native Shetland breeds. A complete "field to

fork" business, not only is Jakob a farmer, but a trained butcher who supplies their lamb and beef direct to wholesalers and retailers.

"All our meat is under the brand name of Uradale Farm. I take livestock straight from the abattoir and I butcher straight to the customer and supply country shops, café's, restaurants and other butchers. I do everything mostly myself; I have three trained butchers that I use if I'm stretched a bit thin. I call them a 'team of butchers' that I trust to rely on, if I'm needing a hand."

Written By: Laura McCulloch
Image: Misa Hay

At the very edge of the UK, Shetland is just 400 miles south of the Arctic Circle - as far north as St Petersburg, Russia and Alaska. Its unique location may be beautiful but comes with its challenges.

"The distance from the mainland can severely impact and limit what I can do for my business. We endure a twelve-hour boat journey on the North Sea to get to our closest city, Aberdeen. Alternatively, we can take a one-hour plane journey to the same location or further south, however this can be quite costly and is dependent on unreliable Scottish weather," says Jakob.

Living in a remote location not only affects him personally, but professionally. In Shetland, sport plays a huge part in the community's social calendar but again, is limited.

"You don't have a choice here, if you're not a fan of rugby or football then I'd feel sorry for you. Sport is huge in Shetland, but it can be very limiting, especially if you're interested in indoor sports."

As well as a limiting sports agenda, Jakob admits this stunning but isolating location offers little to do at times.

"The connection of either signal or Wi-Fi can be quite poor and cuts you off from doing certain things. Generally there's not a huge amount to do at times."

Whilst acknowledging the obstacles of his home, Jakob is not shy of reasons for wanting to create a livelihood here.

"It's not like London, there's no knife crime or the issues that are faced down in the cities. I always feel so safe and it's nice not having to watch my back."

Widely recognised for its beauty, Shetland's fantastic scenery doesn't go



Image:
Alex stonehut

unappreciated by its locals who are bound by a strong sense of community.

"There's a strong connection here.

The older ones teach the younger ones life skills and because it is an Isle, we all depend on each other to make things tick. It's not just the older generation doing everything, as they depend on the youth for work and to keep the community and economy going," explains Jakob.

Jakob is conscious that to be young and successful in your own business and to meet the demand of his customers, hard work and long hours are essential.

"It is a very stressful job depending on



We endure a 12 hour boat journey on the North Sea to get to our closest city, Aberdeen."

the time of year. At the back end of each year I am forced to work nights in order to complete a butchery order but that's just part of doing the job well."

After being recognised as Scottish land-based and agricultural Learner of The Year in 2017, Jakob has made a name for himself in the Scottish agricultural community.

This momentous award was "incredibly humbling" to win and motivates other young entrepreneurs like Jakob, to consider a career in the rural sector.

"It's incredibly endearing and proves that putting in hard work does pay off. It encouraged me to keep going and that I was on the right path. It's just a great feeling to be honoured with something like that."

With exceptional scenery, a vibrant community and a career on his front step;

for Jakob Shetland will always be his home. Nevertheless, being able to voice his

opinions about rural issues is something he appreciates since joining the Rural Youth Project in 2018.

"The Rural Youth Project connects everyone from similar backgrounds. It's amazing that someone across the world could be facing similar difficulties to me, which puts things into perspective. It's also a great learning curve to see how other people across the world are farming or running businesses."

"It's amazing that someone across the world could be facing similar difficulties to me."



BBC Countryfile's Adam Henson presenting Jakob with his award
Image: Lantra Scotland

PROUD TO PRODUCE MEAT WITH INTEGRITY

J. Campbell

Joyce Campbell
Sheep Farmer, Sutherland
Farming with Integrity since 1989



meatwithintegrity.com

GO ON, INSPIRE ME!

Images: Craig Stephen

KIRSTY &
AIMEE BUDGE

SHETLAND



FROM SISTERS TO BUSINESS PARTNERS:

After the sad loss of their father, both sisters have continued to run the family farm together. They were named 2018 UK Farming Heroes.

Everyday is a new day for the girls. From learning to drive a combine to calving cows, the farm has given them a reason to get up in the morning.

Although grieving, there were 90 cows and 240 sheep needing fed.

The sisters also established the first young farmers club on Shetland.

TOP TIP:

"Take the chance of higher education. It has allowed us to bring vital skills back home to the farm."

DIRK-JAN
KLOET

NETHERLANDS



CREATING A LEARNING JOURNEY:

After studying agriculture, DJ now works one day a week on a farm and spends the rest of his time running his own business.

This unique business focuses on organising learning trips and master classes on innovation in agriculture. His tours include showing people around rural businesses.

In May 2018 he led a group of RYP delegates on a five day trip around the Netherlands. This included visiting the world's first floating dairy farm.

TOP TIP:

"Work together and create your dream team. Never stop believing in your idea."

FFION
STORER JONES

WALES



THE POWER OF CONNECTION:

Known as 'Fairtrade Ffion', she has a passion for sustainable global food production.

From a family farm in Mid-Wales, Ffion now works for a youth organisation in Brussels.

She organised for a fairtrade coffee farmer from Uganda to come to Wales and speak to local children about his work.

TOP TIP:

"Bringing people together is the best way of getting them to listen, but it's not easy.

Make good use of technology - e.g facetime a farmer which helps bring farmers into classrooms."

THE MAGIC BEHIND GUARDSWELL

Cover star, Anna Lamotte's zeal for rural life and her business are boundless. By incorporating her many passions, she has shown that creating work you love in a rural area is possible.

Written By: Laura McCulloch
Images: Guardswell Farm

The top of the hill has Anna's quirky trademark all over it. Her diversified rural business in Perthshire hosts laid-back weddings and workshops, produces

flavoursome home-cooked food, and rents out unique get-away-from-it-all huts – proof that a rural setting can provide career opportunities.

Growing up round the corner from Guardswell on a family farm, Anna never believed that the picturesque landscape that was the backdrop to her childhood would one day become her office view.

"Moving home was never on the agenda but I'm so glad I did. I always imagined living on a desert island or off grid on the west coast of Scotland in a wee bothy with my dog," smiles Anna.

After completing a degree in marine biology, Anna wanted to combine her passion of baking and teaching children about growing vegetables. Pounding the pavements of Edinburgh with her resume in hand, she briefly considered a career as a chef in the capital before returning home to Perth.

"We bought Guardswell Farm in 2010, with the initial idea of having a few huts but the plan grew arms and legs and has become something a little bigger."

This rural venue has now gone from a few getaway huts, which offered a simple stove and shower, to hosting 200 capacity events, such as weddings. The business also run a small cookery school, conduct educational workshops, such as floral art and wooden spoon carving and provide stunning onsite accommodation; all of which attracts visitors from across the world.

"The cool part of this business is that we can encourage people who lead super hectic



Anna at the 2018 RYP Ideas Festival
Image: Craig Stephen



Moving home was never on the agenda but I'm so glad I did."

lives, to come out of urban areas and enjoy a rural setting. Here people can reconnect with the outdoors, learn something new and have fun," explains Anna.

However, getting to this point in her career was not easy.

After the core business was up and running, Anna knew living by her round the clock profession was a necessity but finding a suitable house took two and a half years.

"Finding a house in a five mile radius here is extremely challenging. Abernigh is one of the closest villages but properties don't come up for sale there. Affordability stakes is a huge

challenge to young people trying to live in this rural area.”

Having recently just settled into a cottage near Guardswell, Anna knows first-hand the circular impact affordable housing is having on rural communities.

“How are we ever going to have thriving communities if we don’t have places for young people to stay? Then there’s no young businesses starting up, no young people working and no children.”

Caring about the future of her local area, Anna is involved in a campaign to help support the local school, which is under threat of closure due to having only ten pupils enrolled.

“If there’s no young people staying in rural communities, then there are no children to go to the local school and that local school provides jobs. The more expensive houses get, the less chance there’s going to be for young people to want to settle in a rural area and start a family,” she added.

“We’re fortunate here to have a very energetic, older community but what happens when the older generation need cared for and there’s no young people in the community



to keep an eye on them? It is vital to have a broad demographic of ages if rural communities are going to survive.”

Guardswell’s Instagram-worthy setting, helps Anna promote her business. However poor broadband connectivity is one of the main challenges her rural location presents.

“Internet speed and access is a huge challenge, especially when running a business and relying on the social media and website element to make that business thrive. At times it can take me a good minute to upload an image to our website, whereas if I was to go sit in a café in Dundee it would only take 10 seconds.”

Anna’s flare for rural life includes a want to improve youngsters understanding of food and the outdoors. Attending the 2018 Rural Youth Project Ideas Festival, she was



able to learn and share with young people from across the UK and Europe.

This experience also led Anna to appreciate the importance of having a platform to raise issues such as affordable rural housing.

“The Rural Youth Project is invaluable. Having a group of people saying, ‘this is the challenge we face’ and taking that forward as a collective has a stronger impact compared to everyone independently shouting in their own little corners of Scotland.”

Now planning for the future, the young business women says “2020 will be Guardswell’s year of education”, with plans in place to introduce children’s outdoor camps.

“There’s not many industries where you get to work with happy people all the time, in a beautiful spot, surrounded by childhood memories and I love that.”

It is vital to have a broad demographic of ages if rural communities are going to survive.”



The business is a family affair.
Sisters Anna & Kirstin Lamotte



Getting back to our roots

A herbal cuppa and tour of Kirstin Lamotte's polytunnels, reveals that green fingers and a love for rural life are in the blood at Guardswell.

Written By: Laura McCulloch

The smell itself as I walked down the humid rows, confirmed that Kirstin was equally as enthusiastic about fresh produce as her sister.

As the two, clad in their trademark dungarees, toured me around the meadow of plants, it was clear that Guardswell is very much a family affair.

"I think my passion for growing food was always hiding somewhere," admitted Kirstin.

"Over the years I've realised that growing might be in the family, or the blood, as they say."

After selling the family dairy farm in the 1980's, the Lamotte family spotted a gap in the market and opened a new type of farm; a farm that would sculpt sisters, Anna and Kirstin's future.

Together for 25 years their mum, Fiona and grandfather, Robert ran Scotherbs, Scotland's first ever herb farm.

After moving to Canada in 2016, Kirstin worked on a small organic vegetable farm called 'Terra Firma Farms', where her enthusiasm for cultivating food grew.

Since returning home to Perth, Kirstin set up Guardswell Grows, on the old Scotherbs site where her passion once began. Now a sister company to Guardswell Farm, Guardswell Grows specialises in growing mixed, chemical free vegetables.

"I loved the physical, outdoor work in Canada and growing food that I knew was good for us and our environment; something I wanted to continue back home."

Kirstin works across two sites which the farm is split into; Watery-butts Farm and Guardswell Farm. Between both sites she has an extensive portfolio of produce including tomatoes, aubergines, cucumbers, chillies, basil, chard, kale, cabbage,



Image: Kirstin Lamotte



Kirstin at home working in the polytunnel
IMAGE: Anna Lamotte

“

It's a great way of connecting people to their food and uniting a rural community.”

beetroot, spring onions, winter squash and of course herbs.

“A huge part of my job involves selling the produce to markets, shops, restaurants, veg boxes and our newly created ‘farmstand’.

The quirky flair from the top of Guardswell's hill is reflected at the road end, inside the farmstand. Full of colour and fragrance, this converted horse box is helping locals get back to their roots.

Ensuring its shelves are bursting with greens, herbs and plants 24/7, with an honesty box in place for visitors to use, Kirstin has found that simple ideas can have a huge impact.

“It's a great way of connecting people to their food and uniting a rural community. Many locals now head to the farmstand instead of having to travel to the supermarket, so it's nice to see that what I do is creating a need.”

Kirstin continued that she wants to use her work to educate people about the sustainability of food, exactly how it has been produced and how reducing food miles often equals more nutrient dense produce.

“Unfortunately, many people have no idea where a single thing on their plate comes from. We spend so little money on our food today compared to before – but why? It is so important for us. Teaching people to buy seasonally and locally means they can choose to support farmers who farm in a way they believe is right.”

Although many of Kirstin's customers collect their vegetables from the farm, she likes to deliver it personally, creating a field to fork approach. However, living rurally means this can prove

difficult, especially when mostly working alone.

“Small jobs like delivering vegetables would be easier if I were not based in a rural area but I'm used to living rurally and have adapted to what I know,” she explains.

“The outdoors is my home and always will be. I am lucky to have such beautiful rural spaces on my doorstep to work from everyday.”



Image: Laura McCulloch



Image: Kirstin Lamotte

Digby Sowerby: MDS Trainee Group 43

What university did you go to and what did you study?

The University of Bath to study International Management and French.

What appealed to you the most about MDS?

Having the opportunity to complete four completely different work experiences in two years, within the industry makes, MDS tough to beat. It also offered the possibility of working abroad, which for me is a big tick.

What was your most influential learning moment during MDS?

This was in my first secondment, working as intake and dispatch supervisor at Lower Hope Fruit. I came to the realisation that the academic work at university (especially French) didn't necessarily help to get the job done. Being able to experience a role where I jumped in at the deep-end allowed me to demonstrate a different skill set that I wouldn't have had exposure to otherwise.

If you were to give advice to anyone graduating university and looking for a career in food and fresh produce, what would it be?

Other than apply for MDS, I'd say get to know people. Go to events, email companies, be outgoing. I find this incredibly tricky, but this really is where opportunities appear. Who you know is just as important as what you know, and I don't think this will change soon. Of course you need to be interested in the industry, but this should come across naturally if it is true.



Amy Bere: MDS Trainee Group 43

What university did you go to and what did you study?

Harper Adams University, Agri-business

Why did you want to go into agriculture?

Growing up on a small holding in South Yorkshire lead me down the agricultural route, after studying Business Studies at A Level, Agri-business at Harper Adams felt the perfect stepping stone to a future in the ag industry. I often spent school and university holidays and now more recently weekends chasing sheep, making hay and everything else in-between.

What appealed to you the most about MDS?

Having the opportunity to gain valuable industry experience and be thrown in at the deep end with a range of companies. At MDS you are given the opportunity to excel by being given real responsibilities.

What has been your most exciting or memorable moment during your time on MDS?

Working at BASF I was fortunate to get the project of coordinating the Real Results Farms Open Days. Being given the responsibility of representing a member company helped me understand the difference that I could make and what my strengths are.

If you were to give advice to anyone graduating university and looking for a career in food and fresh produce, what would it be?

Get as much industry experience as you can, graduate schemes are a great opportunity to learn about the supply chain over a short 2-year period, if you are not certain on the path you want to take keep your options open, you never know what or when an opportunity may arise.



Do you want to work in the food and fresh produce industry, want to be challenged and given the opportunity to develop? If you want to have the same experiences as Digby and Amy and find your best fit in an exciting career, then apply for MDS.

Find out more at www.mds-ltd.co.uk or follow our trainee of the month on Instagram [@managementdevelopmentservices](https://www.instagram.com/managementdevelopmentservices)

BOATS BATPHONES & BEAUTY

Having friends aged 19-90, islander Amy Dunnachie is committed to life on the Isle of Jura. By creating a powerful community spirit, Amy hopes to attract more young people to live on this untouched corner of the Inner Hebrides.

Written By: Laura McCulloch

During the 2019 Rural Youth Project Ideas Festival, one of Jura's quirkiest characters made the seven-hour journey to speak at the event.

Inspiring this year's delegates, Amy Dunnachie spoke about her island life and how she makes things work for her personally and professionally on this beautiful but isolating spot.

"I'm under no illusion about my privileged young women status at all. I'm very fortunate to be standing here, well fed, well educated, even if I did access that education via a fishing boat."

Amy grew-up on the Isle of Jura before moving to the mainland to study silversmithing at the Glasgow School of Art. After graduating, she found there was a magnetic draw pulling her back to the coastline she calls home.

"I always knew I wanted to come back

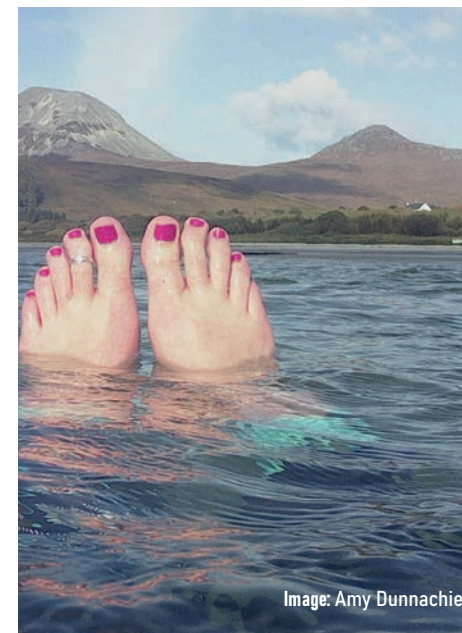


Image: Amy Dunnachie

to Jura at some point. Family connection is a big reason why my partner and I, decided to be on Jura as our families live here,” explained Amy.

“After doing the classic, working in a pub for a while, my cravings for challenge caught up with me. I got myself a job as a youth worker on the neighbouring island

“I was travelling 9 hours a week to my 16 hour a week job” of Islay and that’s how I began topping up my wage.”

During this time, Amy worked at least three jobs across both islands and within one year worked ten different jobs.

“I was travelling to Islay three days a week, but it was very expensive to take my car and cost me just over a fifth of my monthly wage to do this. So, I ended up getting a ‘Jura car’.”

Keeping a beat-up car on Jura and a nicer car on Islay helped lower Amy’s transport costs. However, after coming to terms with travelling nine hours every week to her sixteen hour a week job, she realised this was no longer sustainable.

“One of my friends from Jura has a saying that goes – ‘Jura will provide’ and provide it did. When my jobs were dipping to around the two at a time mark, along came a project with the Jura Development Trust. This really set things in motion for me and was a huge turning point in my life.”

This particular project involved developing a community walking path. Despite not having a lot of project management knowledge, Amy was trusted with it and turned to her creative skillset to complete the job.

This skillset continued to connect the community to Jura’s breath-taking landscape and also to their childhood.

“I thought it would be good to create a legacy,” smiled Amy.

“So we ran a community art, team building project. It’s called a Batphone, a little musical instrument made from recycled materials, that you create music with simply by using a bat.”

This project gave Amy a taste of how powerful working in a community can be and provided one of her most life affirming moments on Jura.

“I was kayaking to work one morning; I know that alone is life affirming,” she laughed.

“In the distance I could see a van in the carpark and because everyone knows which car belongs to who on the island, I knew exactly who it was. He’s someone who is immensely talented yet nervous and doesn’t put himself out there. He thought he was completely alone, at 8:30am jamming away on the Batphone, drumming until his heart was content. It was an amazing moment; one that confirmed this is where I belong.”

Sadly, these community-based occupations have short life spans but are so vital to rural and remote areas. Amy has found that community moral and spirit can severely dip when these roles are no longer sustained.



Children playing the Batphone on the Isle of Jura

AMY'S TOP TIPS FOR LIVING ON AN ISLAND

1. GET INVOLVED

Set up a community event, organise a beach clean, help with the local school panto & always do it with a smile!

2. GET OUTDOORS

Enjoy what your rural surroundings has to offer. Even in the wind, rain & hail - get out there.

3. LISTEN

When I was a kid on Jura I was listened to and treated equally. This intergenerational aspect is vital in remote areas.

4. STAY CURIOUS

Judging alone feeds negativity and is really easy to do in small communities but curiosity feeds your fire.

“Jura will continue to meet this problem, where they don’t have anyone fighting their corner. This can break trust which is really hard to earn in the first place,” explains Amy.

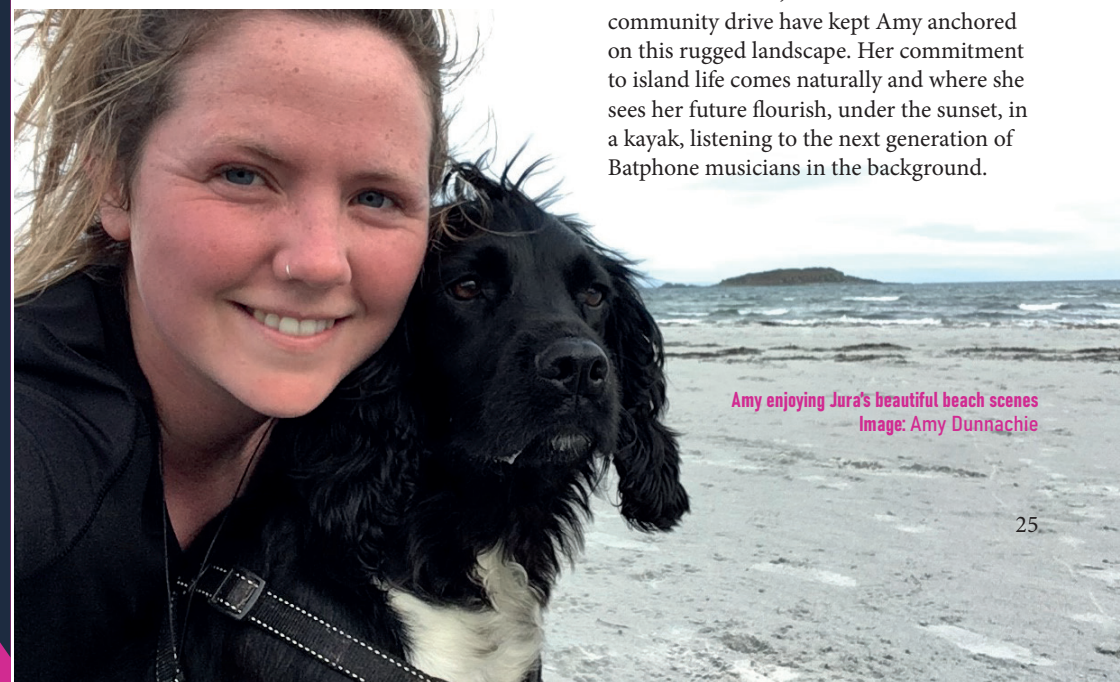
Nevertheless, Amy dedicates her personal time to developing Jura’s community spirit, by holding a wild swimming group every Sunday and is also a member of the local coastguard.

“Our coastguard team are 50/50 split of men and women, which is unusual as it is usually male dominated. It has been an incredible learning experience I wouldn’t have had if I didn’t live on Jura.”

Now studying a masters at the University of Highlands and Islands, Amy has settled into a caravan with her partner. Finding affordable, long-term rental accommodation on the island has proven difficult but again, Amy’s creative mind has been useful.

“We were living in a house on a private estate, but the heating was expensive to maintain and was inefficient. After a year we decided it was unsustainable and moved into a caravan. I’ve renovated it and really turned it into a home. We love it,” smiles Amy.

Her motivation, island culture and community drive have kept Amy anchored on this rugged landscape. Her commitment to island life comes naturally and where she sees her future flourish, under the sunset, in a kayak, listening to the next generation of Batphone musicians in the background.



Amy enjoying Jura's beautiful beach scenes
Image: Amy Dunnachie



The Flexstead: connecting young people to the countryside – and themselves
Image: McMullan Studio

EXPLORE

EXPERIMENT

EVOLVE

Written By: Laura McCulloch

Taking on the
affordable housing crisis
with a fresh set of eyes:
McMullan Studio have
created the
future way of
living for
rural youth

Innovative. Ambitious

Two words used frequently by architect Andrew McMullan and among his studio's work. Two words which accurately describe the 'Flexstead'.

"We try to create projects which have a meaningful, human impact on people and communities. We enjoy working with ambitious clients and helping them to deliver extraordinary results."

McMullan Studio's recent cutting-edge project has been named 'rural home of the future' after winning an architecture competition focused on creating affordable homes which encourage young people to live in the rural Lakes and Dales in Yorkshire.

The competition, run by Great Place: Lakes and Dales in partnership with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), wanted innovative designs for flexible, affordable housing which would attract under 35's to the area.

"We were interested in this challenge because we are very curious about providing solutions for affordable housing problems for

young people – whether that be in the city or the countryside," explained Andrew.

A graduate from the Architectural Association and Cambridge University, one of the best schools of architecture in the world; Andrew has held senior-level positions leading projects, which include working on the 2012 Olympic Games master-plan. His passion for innovative design has shaped award-winning work in New York, Singapore, London and Shanghai and now focused outside the city lights.

The Flexstead, created by McMullan studio, is a flexible dwelling inspired by the fluid layout of traditional farmsteads. A core aim of the design was to offer young people the freedom to create their own rural lifestyle on an affordable budget.

"We pride ourselves on having a very high levelled empathy. We put ourselves into the shoes of other people to create exceptional projects," explains Andrew.

"With the Flexstead it was about creating something that is affordable but enables



Changing the landscape:
The potential to change perceptions of rural life
Image: McMullan Studio

people to add their own personality and create something specific to their needs which can evolve over a lifetime.”

Working by his motto “being an expert in being a non-expert”, Andrew and his team were dedicated to looking at this project with a fresh set of eyes.

“We see ourselves as detectives. We’re trying to find the clues to a fresh solution that others may not spot – using unique ways to create homes for people to live in.”

Digging under the surface of this challenge, the studio conducted an examination of rural communities to help understand the context in which they were designing but also what a young person choosing to live there would want and need.

Due to be built in the village of Horton in Ribblesdale, the design includes a large volume of space with very few internal walls. By doing so, there is no prescribed layout and no extra expense of knocking walls down if a person dislikes the original set up.

“The Flexstead allows walls to be built when the person has the money to do so, rather than a young person having the added cost of altering a space to their specific needs.”

The two-storey stone shell has high ceilings, providing an airy, light feeling with open plan

layout throughout. Its striking roof creates a local landmark and is divided in two by a light well to connect residents to their rural surroundings.

To ensure its winning design meets the highest standards of affordability, sustainability and construction, McMullan Studio collaborated with some of the UK’s leading consultants and engineers.

“By working with our world-class consultant team, we were able to use very little concrete, which is one of the most energy intensive construction processes.

“Using a prefabricated structural timber floor instead meant the building could be built quicker,” explained Andrew.

Working alongside Chelsea Flower Show gold medal winners, the design incorporates a natural landscape with allotments and



We can use this house as a way of generating a community drive to create great places to live.”

spaces to grow food. As Andrew explained the idea behind this was that “food pulls people together” and by getting to know and share ideas with your neighbour, stronger communities will be built.

To control the quality of construction, the project was mainly pre-fabricated in a factory. However, the studio considered every element of this process from the perspective of young people.

“It was important to us that we engaged with local suppliers and supported the local economy as much as possible throughout the project. We are looking to kick start an apprentice scheme in traditional stone techniques,” says Andrew.

“Stone walling is a dying art but it’s a fantastic local technique that is well suited to the National Park area. By building the Flexstead from stone we can use this house as a way of supporting local people and generate a community drive to create great places to live.”

The future plan is now to replicate the prototype across the whole of the UK The

prefabricated design means it can be rolled out quickly, at a high standard and at an affordable price, helping improve the housing crisis. It’s flexible internal and external look means materials can be easily changed to suit any surrounding.

“It is similar to a hiking boot; it is humble and robust from the outside, but the interior is high tech, very innovative and sophisticated. Generally, there is no site that it wouldn’t be applicable to, and therefore has the potential to be rolled out in huge numbers.”

McMullan Studio look forward to working with Great Place: Lakes and Dales and Craven Council to create a dynamic new generation of rural communities. Their passion for understanding who they are creating for has prospered into the change rural youth need. Merged between the stone, timber and metal is a bond between designer and user. A bond that will instigate young people to “explore, experiment and evolve” in the future.

Find out more at:
www.mcmullanstudio.com/

FLEXIBLE
AFFORDABLE

Room to create: interiors that are whatever you want them to be
Image: McMullan Studio



THINK DIFFERENTLY

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PROJECT



Jane Craigie & MSP Mairi Gougeon at day one of the festival
Image: Craig Stephen

Rural Loop steps into the 2019 Rural Youth Project

Ideas Festival:

“Just do it”, was one of the key take homes from the 2019 Rural Youth Project Ideas Festival, held at Wiston Lodge in Biggar, Scotland.

The weekend was aimed at connecting young people from both rural and urban areas, helping them become leaders in their rural communities, push for change and share experiences.

Fifteen speakers from across the UK and Europe, all with diverse backgrounds, challenged and motivated the youngsters to think differently about their communities, businesses and future in rural areas.

Setting the foundations for a productive weekend, the youngsters heard from Mairi Gougeon, Scottish Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment, who reiterated the point that young voices matter. She discussed how to contact your local MSP and how to get your foot in the door with regards to making positive change in communities.

Among this year’s delegates was Sarah Bryant from Cork, Southern Ireland, who thrived on the weekends activities:

“It was such a worthwhile experience and I’m already planning my return journey to the 2020 festival, as well as a trip to visit the new friends I have made. The weekend recognised the power of youth coming together as a force. The diversity of speakers taught us new ideas and also added that extra feeling of inclusion and unity. If you are passionate about rural communities, want to meet like-minded people and have some great food and drink along the way, then I couldn’t recommend the RYP Ideas Festival enough.”

Exploring the winter scenes of Wiston

was also on the agenda, as delegates had the opportunity to try archery, drumming, bush craft, climbing and tackle a morning hike up Tinto hill to catch the spectacular sunrise.

As the workshops, presentations and socialising progressed, the range of stories together in one lodge was taking affect. Take Treasa Ni Cheadagain’s from Cape Clear Island, the most southernmost inhabited part of Ireland. Her own little story seemed minute to Treasa; but so relatable to others around her. Living on an island brings its challenges, such as not being able to order a Chinese takeaway on a Friday night; an indulgence that many of us take for granted on the mainland.

After a fast ferry started running from the mainland to Cape Clear Island, Treasa had the bright idea of using it to transport the community’s Friday night treats across the sea. A simple way of connecting a rural community through the excitement of food.

This quirky story brought up deeper issues of island life in general and the vitality of good transport links in remote areas.

The feeling of positivity on departure was immense. With the radio turned up full on the drive home, it allowed time to reflect on the inspiring people and stories that were found at Wiston. People and stories that together, now have the ability to return home and make change.



Sarah Bryant & Treasa Ni Cheadagain at the 2019 RYP Ideas Festival
Image: Craig Stephen



COMMUNICATING TO THE Future

After making the life changing move from Australia to rural Scotland earlier this year, Alana Black talks to Rural Loop about her experience and why improving communication is key to positive change for rural youth.

Aussie girl Alana Black, is no stranger to rural living. Since the age of five, she lived in Rydal, Australia; a small populated town of around 50 people in central western New South Wales, with poor internet access and transport links. But to Alana this tiny town will always be home.

Her enthusiasm to create positive change among young people flourished after getting involved with 'Heywire'; an Australian based project aimed at putting young people at the centre of conversations to help shape their rural communities.

With her Bachelor of Communications Public Relations in hand, earlier this year

Alana left the views of Rydal to settle in Aberdeenshire, Scotland as a freelance agricultural communicator; her passion for rural change following her.

Now seven months later, she has been appointed as Communication and Project Co-ordinator for the Rural Youth Project. After attending the 2018 Ideas Festival as a delegate, Alana's commitment to the project was transparent.

Rural Loop caught up with Alana to find out how she is implementing her drive for rural change in Scotland and how she has coped finding her feet in a foreign land.



What have you found most challenging about moving to a rural area?

Finding a support network of friends has been difficult. It's not easy developing new friendships when you're in your mid 20's, especially in a small rural community where strong ties already exist. It's also hard to navigate where you fit in. However, I have been lucky to meet some amazing people through my work who have welcomed me into their lives.

Adjusting to home sickness has also been difficult. For me, it's been the little things that I didn't think I'd miss that I have; like cooking lessons with my Mum or weekend coffee club with my Dad. But it's not every day the opportunity to move to a new country at an age where you don't carry long term responsibilities come about.

What are your favourite 'Aussie' sayings?

"Ridgey-didge" is always a favourite and the ultimate character reference for someone. It basically means they're authentic.

The everyday Australian slang that I use is "no worries", "no dramas" or "too easy". It's like saying "don't worry about it", "no problem" and "you're welcome" all at the same time.

What impact has your involvement with Heywire had on you?

Heywire has been a huge catalyst in my life. It's a storytelling competition where young Australian's 16-22 years old, write in about their experience of living rurally and is led by ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation).

Out of the 1000's of entries Heywire receive each year, they choose 40 to join the Heywire Summit. In 2017, Heywire established an arm off this called Trailblazers for an older demographic – 18 to 28 year olds – who have projects running in rural communities. I applied to become a Heywire Trailblazer for my project Fledgling Farmers which focusses on improving communication in farming succession and I was lucky to be one of the ten chosen across the country to attend the Heywire Summit in 2018.

It's a week-long intensive programme that provides the environment to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of your project and provide a platform to promote our work to parliamentarians, philanthropists and public servants. This opportunity has given me a support network, new skills in media, pitching and provided life-long mentors.

Why do you think it's so important to help young people become better communicators?

Communication, especially in family owned businesses, like farms, is something that people tend to push to the back of their minds; but it's so important. Poor communication means people can easily adopt a negative attitude, which affects their personal and professional life. This is especially true in rural areas, where it is easier to feel isolated or alone. It's important that young people know and understand that there are

people willing to listen and provide support.

Why do you think the Rural Youth Project is so important?

From the 2018 Ideas Festival, I knew that the Rural Youth Project has the ability to impact so many young people in Scotland and beyond.

Participating in Heywire in Australia made such a positive impact in my life. I believe the Rural Youth Project has the ability to have the same impact on a global scale. The project has been running for less than two years and it's clear to see the influence we are already having, so I'm excited to see how far we come in the next few years.

What has been your personal highlight of being involved in the Rural Youth Project so far?

Going on the Netherlands Learning Journey in May 2019 was an incredible experience. A particular highlight of this trip for me was visiting the world's first floating dairy farm. We were the first people in the world to get a tour of this fantastic facility, which was pretty cool. These learning journeys are amazing opportunities provided by the Rural Youth Project and we look forward to offering more in the future.

What is your top tip for anyone interested in getting involved with the Rural Youth Project?

To reference Jane Craigie (Rural Youth Project Director) at the 2019 Ideas Festival "just do it". Whether it's getting involved with RYP or another project, take the plunge and you won't regret it.



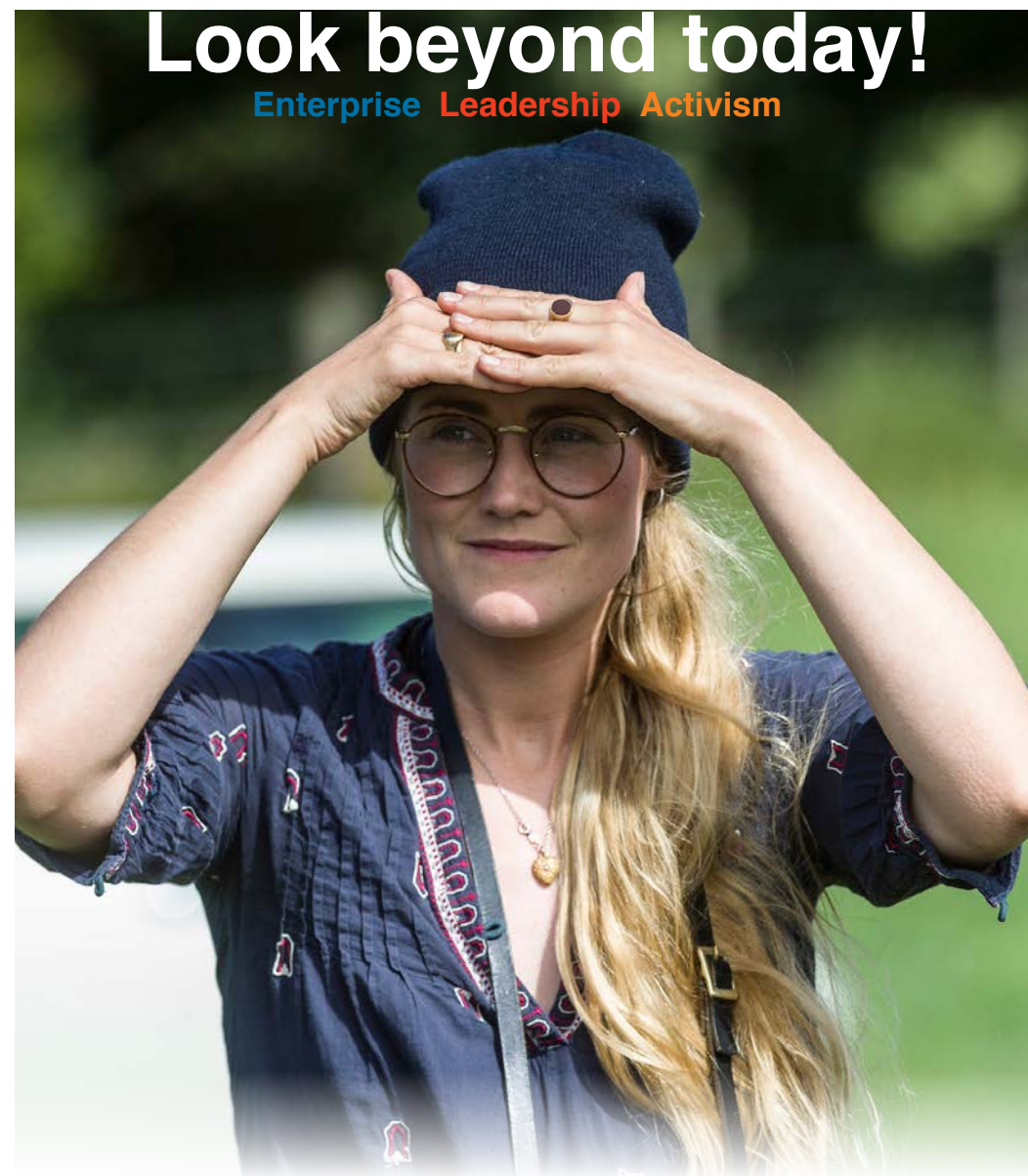
Alana speaking at Heywire gala dinner
Image: ABC Heywire



Alana preparing for live TV
Image: ABC Heywire

For more information on the Rural Youth Project and Heywire follow:

<https://www.ruralityouthproject.com/> - <https://www.abc.net.au/heywire/about/>



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