

Minutes of Cross Party Group on Women in Enterprise

07 February 2018 – Theme: Women in the Rural Economy

Attendees: Anne Meikle, Women's Enterprise Scotland (secretariat); Carolyn Currie, WES; Jackie Brierton, WES vice chair, Chief Executive, GrowBiz (speaker); Lynn Mann, business owner and WES Ambassador; Gill Lawrie, Farmer/LEADER/RSA; Ailsa Campbell, GrowBiz/business owner; Beth Bell, GrowBiz / business owner; Catriona Rowan, GrowBiz/ business owner; Patrick Krause, Women in Agriculture Task Force/Scottish Crofters Federation; Sally Shortall (speaker), Women in Agriculture Task Force, Researcher, Newcastle University; Joyce Bannerman Campbell, Women in Agriculture Task Force (Chair), Farmer and entrepreneur; Monica Young, Breadalbane Academy (+ 2 pupils - Crista Pringle and Sophie Innes); Shelley Breckenridge, Interface; Lyn Batchelor, Edinburgh Napier University; Aleks Gesing-Kalinowska, Edinburgh Napier University; Mary Williams Edgar, Director, Scottish Rural Action; Susan Grieve, European Network for Rural Development; Alison Hall, business owner; Fiona Leslie, Women in Agriculture Team SG; Dorothy Warren, Women in Agriculture Team, SG; Elaine McGregor, Rural Communities Policy, Team Manager, SG.

MSPs: Gillian Martin (Convenor); Bill Bowman; Rachael Hamilton; Emma Harper.

Apologies: Jane Atterton, SAC; David Gass, Upper Quartile; Lynne Cadenhead, WES Chair; Sara Carter, University of Strathclyde, WES Board; Tom Flanagan, Perth and Kinross Council; Kate Hooper, business owner; Wendy Crawford, business owner; Melanie Thomson, business owner; Laura Galloway, Edinburgh Business School; Marion McCormick, business owner; Morven Smith, SSE; Mhairi Love, Fraser of Allander Institute; Douglas Brown, Scottish Enterprise; Russell Pinkerton, RBS

Gillian Martin MSP opened the meeting and welcomed all delegates. The convenor then handed over to the first speaker of the evening, **Jackie Brierton of GrowBiz**.

Key points from Jackie's presentation included –

- While GrowBiz is not a project for women, 70% of the clients at GrowBiz are women. Some core principles of GrowBiz include – customised business support; a client focussed approach; building trust with the client base; and building capacity for people themselves rather than a complete focus on the business.
- GrowBiz promotes a peer learning network which is an important part of the model and this has been particularly successful for women. Sectoral and topic peer support is available as well as support for those experiencing any health issues.
- A care and well being cooperative was set up in response to self-directed support legislation. This cooperative is now contracted by local health services and has shown to be a very successful model (including drivers, therapists, carers etc).
- Using a mix of 'traditional' and 'smart' support methods for businesses, GrowBiz has proven to be an excellent model of support for rural businesses.

Presentation from **Sally Shortall, Duke of Northumberland Chair of Rural Economy, Newcastle University**. Sally was part of a team commissioned by Scottish Government to carry out Scottish research between May 2016-April 2017.

Key points from Sally's presentation included –

- The research methodology included interviewing two categories of women rural entrepreneurs - New entrants to farming; and Women in rural businesses.
- Literature and the research shows that for women and agriculture – it is remarkable in the extent it is closed to women; Women very rarely inherit land unless they have no brothers; and there are very few women in farming organisations - some have no women on boards or committees.
- The research project exposed lots of evidence of female entrepreneurs and what some of the issues were –
 - Women entering agriculture face cultural barriers, lack of access to land and organisational discrimination.
 - New entrants were highly skilled and motivated. Women also liked the idea of the flexibility of their own businesses – especially in helping with care responsibilities.
 - The rural situation mattered for business decisions but no evidence of it intersecting with gender (except for farming)
 - There was a fear of social embarrassment associated with business failure. Need to look at motivations for entrepreneurial activity
- There is a need to recognise the diversity of women entrepreneurs in the rural economy.

Key Points from General Discussion

- There is an issue due to the ageing population of farmers and the lack of young people seeing farming as a career option.
- There is a need to monitor and understand the low numbers of women representatives on farming and agricultural organisations. Need to look at building the confidence of women to go forward for positions on these bodies.
- Also need to look at developing young people in rural areas and seeing that they come forward to be part of organisations in their community. Perhaps a mentoring programme would be useful? (there is a rural leadership programme which includes a mentoring aspect within it.)
- Need to break down some of the barriers (real and perceived) between the farming community and other rural businesses. This could benefit the community more widely through more cooperation.
- There is a need to look at funding for rural businesses not in the high growth sectors.
- Links between this cross party group and others could be really useful – CPG on rural affairs; CPG on towns and town centres.
- Given the issues of travel and time of meetings, etc., it was proposed that some form of video conferencing might be considered in the future for such meetings.

The meeting closed with warm thanks from the convenor.

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