

**Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Rural Policy**

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**6-7.30pm, Microsoft Teams**

**'Rural Recovery: Brexit and Climate Change'**

**Unapproved Minutes**

**Attendees**

<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Abigail Williams	SRUC
Alexa Green	University of Edinburgh
Andrew Fry	Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation
Andrew Moxey	Pareto Consulting (Speaker)
Angela Lamont	Tyne Esk LEADER
Anne Hastie	Tyne Esk LEADER and East Lothian Council Covid-19 Rural Recovery Group
Anne McNeil	A Heart for Duns Development Trust
Anne-Michelle Ketteridge	Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER
Arina Russell	The Woodland trust
Ben Lejac	Support in Mind Scotland
Bobby Macaulay	University of the Highlands and Islands
David Cameron	Community Land Scotland
David Whiteford	Chair, North Highland Initiative
David Gass	Rural Matters
David Thomson	Food and Drink Federation Scotland (Speaker)
David Henderson-Howat	Care Farming Scotland
Davy McCracken	SRUC
David Watts	Aberdeen University
Edward Mountain MSP	Scottish Parliament

Emma Harper MSP	Scottish Parliament
Emma McCallum	Scottish Government
Fiona Mackenzie	University of the Highlands and Islands
Geoff Simm	University of Edinburgh
George Milne	National Sheep Association
Heather Anderson	Scottish Borders Council
Iain Macdonald	Quality Meat Scotland
Jackie Brierton	GrowBiz
Jane Atterton	SRUC
Jayne Glass	SRUC
Jennifer Campbell	Baird Lumsden
Jim Hume	Support in Mind Scotland
John Scott MSP	Scottish Parliament
Josephine Heger	SRUC/University of Edinburgh
Kate Rowell	Just Transition Commission (Speaker)
Kerstin Hinds	RESAS
Leigh Mair	Scottish Rural Health Partnership
Lindsay Wood	A Heart for Duns Development Trust
Lorna Dawson	Farming, Food and Countryside Commission (Speaker)
Lucy Mitchell	Scottish Association Young Farmers Clubs
Mads Fischer-Moller	SRUC (Speaker)
Marcus Craigie	SRUC
Margaret Brown	NHS Scotland
Mark Shucksmith	The Institute for Social Renewal, Newcastle University
Michelle & Ian Macdonald	
Murray Ferguson	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Ninian Stuart	Falkland Estate

Paul Zochowski	East Lothian
Pete Ritchie	Nourish Scotland
Peter Ross	Dumfries and Galloway LEADER
Rebecca Audsley	SAC Consulting
Rhoda Grant MSP	Scottish Parliament
Robin Clarke	Highlands and Island Enterprise
Sara Bradley	University of the Highlands and Islands
Sarah Jones	Lancaster University
Sarah Skerratt	Scottish Consortium for Rural Research
Scott Murray	SRUC
Scott McElvanney	
Steven Thomson	SRUC (Speaker)
Sue Whittle	Compassion Edinburgh – Local Volunteer Group
Thomas Mulvey	
Vanessa Halhead	Scottish Rural Action
Wayne Grills	British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI)

### Apologies

Daniel Gotts	Scottish Natural Heritage
Hannah Downey	Scottish Rural Network
Ishabel Bremner	Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group
Rachel Tennant	Landscape Institute Scotland
Sam Foster	Rural Housing Scotland
Rosie Simpson	John Muir Trust
James MacKessack-Leitch	Scottish Land Commission
Daniel Gotts	NatureScot

## 1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

Due to a late Decision Time in the Chamber, Jim Hume (Convener of the National Rural Mental Health Forum) kindly agreed to Chair the meeting until the agreed Chair (John Scott MSP) could join us. John Scott MSP took over as Chair during the Q&A part of the meeting following the presentations.

Some MSPs were able to be present at the start of the meeting, including Emma Harper MSP and Rhoda Grant MSP.

Jim Hume welcomed everyone to the third and final meeting of the 2020-21 CPG year and of the 2016-21 parliamentary session. Jim Hume noted that the Secretariat had emailed an agenda and list of attendees to all participants. Over 70 people were registered for this meeting.

Jim Hume noted several practical issues for attendees to bear in mind during the meeting, including keeping their microphone on mute when not speaking and raising their hand or typing into the chat function when they wish to ask a question. He also noted that the meeting was being recorded but only for the purpose of writing a minute; the recording will not be made publicly available. Please use #cpgrural when tweeting/re-tweeting. With speakers' permission, all slides will be uploaded to the webpage for this meeting alongside the agenda and meeting minute and the link will be forwarded to the Group's mailing list. Please send any comments/corrections on the minute to [rpc@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:rpc@sruc.ac.uk).

SRUC's Rural Policy Centre (Secretariat) has a note of apologies submitted for the meeting and these will be included in the meeting minute (see above).

## 2. Presentations (7 minutes per presentation), followed by discussion

Jim Hume explained the format for the meeting was to have six quick fire opening presentations tackling two big issues in terms of Brexit and climate change.

Each speaker was asked to outline their top 3 challenges and solutions for rural Scotland arising from Brexit and/or climate change. Our final speaker, Professor Mads Fischer-Moller, provides some perspectives from the Nordic countries.

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**Iain Macdonald:** Senior Economics Analyst, *Quality Meat Scotland*

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### Routes to Market

- Having now left the EU we (the UK) are being treated as a third country and this means that the trade in meat with EU countries and with Northern Ireland is much more time consuming and costly than it used to be. Previously, shipping from Edinburgh to London would have been like shipping from Edinburgh to Paris. However, this is different now and there are lots of different layers of bureaucracy to consider. There are lots of different non-tariff barriers because technically trade

should be tariff free, and with this deal it should be simple. But, when you've got products like mince and sausages that are chilled you now can't ship them because there isn't a health certificate for you to support those products. That becomes a major barrier.

- Because of this whole new certification process, there's limited routes to market. If you are a very small meat processor and you don't have a lot of products going at the same time, then you rely on mixing your loads with other companies. If there is a problem with one certificate in the load, this can hold up the whole truck.

### **Rule of origin tariffs**

- There are no quotas and no tariffs on trade but if you have to meet specific rules of origin for your product to actually qualify for the tariff free status and you are a simple exporter (your animal is born on a Scottish farm and processed in a Scottish abattoir) it qualifies for tariff free. But if you are a company which has multiple sites in multiple countries (Britain and Ireland into the EU) and you move different products around to specialise in different parts of the supply chain for a specific retailer or food service business, then because of these rules of origin, when a product moves across the border technically it can be tariff free, but if it has not been processed to a certain degree then it faces the tariff. So a lot of these companies with big supply chains are nervous to get hit by that rule of origin tariff.
- Thinking about impact, based on January 2021, there was a survey carried out by the Meat Wholesalers Association and they found that in general companies were seeing trade at 20% to 25% of earlier levels. So, if that was close to £4 million for beef and £2 million for lamb, based on some seasonal analysis of trade data for the previous year, then that's dropped to below £1,000,000 for beef and maybe only £400,000 to £500,000 for lamb - that's a major hit on export orders. Obviously some of this will reflect the reduced import buying for food service companies on the continent but nevertheless a large part of it is due to these new layers of trade frictions.

### **Alternative markets**

- The second point is you've got all these new frictions, some might say teething problems, but they really are long-term problems with exporting. Unless you are following the same rules as Europe and commit to dynamically aligning your rules, then these problems are going to be there long term. It's never really going to be easy to ship products across the EU border again. So, are there solutions outside the EU? Can you trade with other countries with beef and lamb? There's lots of non-tariff barriers all over the world and also with meat. But the further you get away the time it takes to transport increases which means that instead of selling fresh products have to freeze which devalues the product. If you're freezing it and shipping it a long distance this takes time and it takes money.

### **Climate change**

- Every year Quality Meat Scotland produces an enterprise profitability report looking at different cattle and sheep production systems. For part of this analysis, QMS looks

at carbon emissions and every year they tend to find that its quite difficult to reduce emissions without reducing your animal numbers. There's a lot of room for emissions reduction in sectors of the economy, but for agriculture if we are counting sheep as being a significant part of production in Scotland then I guess the challenge is always going to be there. There is probably going to be a shift of focus towards agriculture as other sectors reduce their emissions over time.

## **Solutions**

### **Moving to a digital system**

- One potential solution on the Brexit side, which could ease things going forward would be a complete overhaul of the systems that are used, away from a paper-based system to more digital system, but obviously that is relying on agreement between UK and EU and a system change, so that might be a long time away.

### **Veterinary agreements**

- A second potential solution for some of the customs challenges would be a veterinary agreement between the EU and UK, which would potentially allow for reduced checks. New Zealand has a much lower of level of physical checks on its meat that gets exported into Europe compared with Britain, where we have 15% of every consignment having to be physically checked.

### **Improving efficiencies**

- Thinking about climate change solutions, I guess we find that productivity, profitability and lower emissions per cow or ewe are linked. So, there are some mitigations if farming improves its productivity and profitability reduced emissions per unit of output.

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**Steven Thomson** Senior Agricultural Economist *SRUC* &  
**Andrew Moxey** Economist, *Pareto Consulting*

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### **Balancing objectives and perspectives**

- **Steven:** For me the number one challenge is about perspectives and this is a case with all policy. I teach agricultural policy to students and I say to them that there is no right or wrong, it's all about perspectives and we all see things from a different lens. It is vital in this that we have respect for what other people think. We also have to understand that there are multiple policy objectives at play within agriculture, whether that is food and drink, whether that's greenhouse gas emissions or whether it's biodiversity. There are a number of competing perspectives out there and trying to get a balance between understanding the balances and trade-offs required amongst policy makers for policy is going to be vital in the future. We have to come to agreement as to the way forward.

## Coming to an 'Agreed Vision' and acting collectively

- **Andrew:** We've got farmer-led groups created by the Cabinet Secretary to try and codesign agricultural policy going forward. And they're all from specific sectors, but collectively they've got to come to some agreed vision as to how we're going to face the future and deal with some of the challenges that Brexit has thrown in and then the additional challenges of meeting the climate change targets. Brexit, and the more recent deliberations about climate change, have just thrown into stark relief things we already knew to be true. When it comes to the challenges facing agriculture such as getting sustainable livelihoods and marrying that up to environmental sustainability, we've been kicking cans down this road for quite a while. But actually, if we continue to keep kicking cans, we're just going to get more landing on top of us because we cannot avoid these challenges.
- **Andrew:** Some of the challenges that are coming down are that the climate change targets are binding. Climate change is happening and it's going to affect all of us. The journey that the farmer led groups are going on, but also agriculture more generally, is just understanding the challenges and accepting what we can do collectively on this. Iain referred to some of the challenges and Steven points out that we all have to do this together. We have to agree on what the common objectives are.

## Designing a support framework for behavioural change

- **Steven:** The final challenge for me, the nub of all policy, is the support framework that we're dealing with. How do we incentivise and manage behavioural change and try and stimulate changes in the way we produce things and in the way that we manage our lands? And we could of course just take the Defra approach which is reduce direct payments and go down a payment for public goods, payment for ecosystem services approach. Or there's an approach that Davy McCracken, myself, Andrew Moxey and Kev Bevan started thinking about which is how do we evolve from the current situation of direct support and add more conditions onto that, whether it is biodiversity or greenhouse gas emissions?
- **Steven:** But we also see a real need for transformation support and capital support to help the industry transform and we still see the need for targeted environmental support, whether that's in peatlands, woodlands, specific habitats or species. And again, this seems to be a common theme for a lot of people in these groups, there needs to be continued support for disadvantaged areas. This includes looking at peripherality as part of that mix because it is currently not part of the LFAS or LFA system support mechanism.

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**Professor Lorna Dawson:** Co-Chair, Food *Farming and Countryside* commission

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- I think we've heard quite clearly that Brexit and climate change are just some of the multiple stressors that we are currently faced with, as well as COVID, biodiversity

loss, unemployment and economic issues. These are all linked together, so at FFCC we are thinking about them as a holistic strategy and about the multiple policies that work together. It's about cooperation, collaboration, and the partnerships that we can make in Scotland to really make a difference. And it's not just about the environment, it's not just about agriculture. It's about how environment links with the animals and how it also links with our human health.

### **FFCC Report (2017-19)**

- In the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission we have a report which we developed from 2017-19. We set out the issues that were important in Scotland, but also set within the context of the United Kingdom and how we need to collaborate, cooperate and provide the innovation that are going to be solutions to the issues of climate change, Brexit and many others. It is also about land reform and land use because land use is going to be vitally important in how we understand and how we deal with these issues of climate change and how we value issues such as mental health initiatives in rural and urban areas as well.

### **Identifying Scotland's priorities**

- In the second phase we conducted a survey where we gathered evidence identifying what the gaps, opportunities and priorities were for this Inquiry. We held roundtables and invited stakeholders from across a wide range of sectors. And from that we've established a cooperative Leadership Group and are currently developing a work plan. Within this Group we have a range of people who are forming the strategy for what are the next priorities and we're going to focus on three priorities which we feel are important to tackle within this context.

#### **1. Digital tools for connectivity and rural growth**

- This project will involve and address climate change, such as exploring the role of digital tools and establishing a platform that is an enabler for both agriculture and food production. To do this we will be understanding how producers can operate within agro-ecological principles and how we can shorten that supply chain. For this project we will be looking at digital tools for rural growth. Because rural connectivity is not just about being able to stream Netflix and iPlayer, but also being able to participate in digital classrooms and catch ups. It should be fair and it should be equitable so that the next generation of rural businesses will agree and finance things like hybrid safer tractors through laptops etc. If we're serious about shortening the distance from farm to fork, then the local producers need to be able to push the product offerings safely through social media and dedicated marketplace apps and not rely on supermarket buyers looking for the cheapest option.

#### **2. Access to sustainable healthy food**

- Our other project is focusing on healthy food and brokering the links between the City of Glasgow and the Alexandra Rose Charity. We're looking at initiatives for the equality of food, exploring how people, particularly on low incomes, can increase their access to good food that is beneficial for their health and the health of the planet. This was inspired by the Beetroot Bond project from the Food, Farming and

Countryside Phase 1 UK Inquiry. Alongside the Bond there will be encouragement for people to become stakeholders and shareholders in their local food systems, who would have the ability to influence decisions on which types of produce will be subsidised such as local, seasonal, organic, high welfare, plastic free or whatever is decided to be the priority. These roles will help reform the good food system in Scotland and will help secure and make the Scottish economy more resilient while delivering on social and environmental priorities.

### **3.Land ownership**

- The last area of the projects is working with partners to highlight case studies of land ownership, and the decision-making that is made across different areas in Scotland, with a particular focus on the Scottish Land Commission and on how we can make those connections between agriculture and the environment. They will work with local and national government communities, landowners and stakeholders, to find ways to optimise the land use to be fair and inclusive, meeting local and national objectives and supporting the journey to net-zero. These particular land use pilots that the Land Commission will be piloting will work together with these pilot groups.

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**David Thomson:** *CEO, Food and Drink Federation Scotland*

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### **Loss of the EU Market**

- I think the key challenge is the loss of the EU market as it is critical, in particular for some industries like seafood, but also many businesses who traditionally have exported to the EU without all the paperwork that you would normally need to export. A part of this is Brexit in general because there was always going to be friction but another part is a result of the specific nature of the deal that has been agreed. I think we face multiple small, medium size and large businesses who now have to rethink where they are selling and rethink their investment in exporting.

### **Local production & consumption**

- One of the key challenges around climate change is the drive for local production and consumption from a rural perspective. I would argue that Scotland certainly produces a lot but does not necessarily sell locally. About 1/4 of the total of food and drink exports for the whole of the UK come from Scotland and its whisky. Beyond that we have salmon production, again a massive export, then beyond that we have the red meat categories. All of these are global successes for the United Kingdom, and one of the interesting things is how policy drivers and other elements are driving both the government and potentially consumers to think more about local consumption and production. I think my hypothesis would be that we've got 5,000,000 consumers in Scotland and we won't necessarily produce enough food to give them a balanced diet. But what we do produce can and should be shared with the world. So, it's going to be an interesting dynamic as we move forward over the next 10 years.

## **The peripherality challenge**

- And the last challenge speaks to Lorna's point about complexity. I sit with Steven and lots of others on the rural think tank for food and drink recovery. The endemic problems for rural Scotland are not a function of climate change or Brexit or Covid. What they are about is being far away from the market and about getting your brand aware in a very difficult time and they're also around the availability of labour and capitalisation for businesses. So all of those issues are still there and still critical in how we need to think about unlocking the success of many more rural businesses solutions.

## **Solutions**

### **Supporting innovation and driving new markets**

- In terms of loss of the market, I think Scotland really has to develop new markets. This means definitively asking, where and how can we stimulate better demand within the UK for products? And, thinking about things like; do we rename fish? Do we find ways to use different parts of the animal? But it also needs government support, funding and intelligence to help explore new markets around the world. And I think there needs to be a renewed focus on trying to drive that commercial aspect.

### **Improving production for net zero**

- In terms of climate change, I think there's a real opportunity for Scottish rural businesses to get on top of net zero and to take the initiative to develop their production in a sustainable way. Collectively businesses need to think really hard about how they can back up their credibility. And that's either through using new technology, different ways of engaging with the customer, through digital or otherwise, and working with academia and others to make sure that productivity is the best, production methods are the best and inputs have a really good resource efficiency.

### **Collaboration of small businesses**

- On the peripherality issue, collaboration is the key. If you've got a whole range of smaller businesses they need to work out how they can collaborate on reducing logistics costs, they need to work out how they can collaborate on marketing together and they need to work out how they can collaborate on innovation that supports rural types of businesses. If businesses are working better together I think they have a greater chance of success in Scotland. We've got many great case studies and we've been working very closely with a huge range of businesses for example, around education and supporting skills into the industry. Scotland Food and Drink are funding a whole new generation of local food initiatives and groups. It's how businesses get involved in and take advantage of these opportunities for collaboration, cooperation and resources that are going to help them grow.

### **Communicating and collaborating for a just transition**

- The Just Transition Commission has produced reports since the beginning of 2019 and we've gathered evidence from all over the country and throughout lots and lots of different sectors. The first thing that we had to do for agriculture was to outline a positive vision of what we would really want to achieve. I think we can all agree that what we want from our land is a sustainable agricultural industry that's dynamic and able to provide food for the country while at the same time helping us to meet our climate targets. And we want the widespread changes to land use that will need to happen, like the growth of forestry and peatland restoration. It should be managed in a way that brings people with us and that's what we really need to aim for to make sure that the transition to net zero is just and fair and doesn't leave anyone behind.
- There is a large fear by some in the agricultural sector that climate change is seen as a threat to their livelihood, and indeed, their whole way of life. And there's also widespread feeling that in our sector we are being asked to do more than our fair share to meet these targets. But equally, there's also the chance to invest in and support our rural economy with new opportunities across the country, often in areas where such opportunities are limited. We've heard plenty of times about the importance of managing land use change in a way that doesn't create resistance or barriers. Strong governance structures are needed to allow people to have a say where the management of the land around them is being changed drastically, and mechanisms need to be created to resolve any conflicts that then occur. We're emphasising the need for future policy to understand and respect the cultural connections that people have built up over many years with the land and to assure them that they won't be forgotten about in the transition to a net zero economy.

### **Encouraging, educating and incentivising for local production and consumption**

- Offshoring emissions is exactly what we want to avoid, it's not a just transition if what we see is domestic food production simply replaced by imports from countries where the cost to the climate is hidden in another inventory. The point was made to us time and time again of the need to support local produce, produced to the highest possible standard in the way least damaging to the environment, and there were surprising parallels to draw between this and the same discussions that are taking place for just transition in heavy industry.
- Many people have suggested mandating that public bodies should source local produce for things like school dinners, and to prioritise food that's being produced in as low a carbon way as possible. And the suggestion here is that creating a market for sustainable food will incentivise farmers to adapt to new methods and would be preferable as a way of bringing the industry with us. And it might also, as a side-line,

develop a greater appreciation of food and more understanding for children as to where food comes from.

- Local food supplies come to the fore during the pandemic, but sometimes lack of infrastructure and complicated supply chains can mean the opportunities are difficult for producers to take advantage of. And the lack of clear labelling can also be an issue for consumers who want to do the right thing and are really keen to do their bit for climate change, but sometimes are uncertain exactly what they can do and which is the best food to buy to achieve this.

### **Encouraging innovation and new entrants**

- We heard a lot about the possibility of correcting existing injustices in the agricultural sector. For an example, we could look at making some agricultural tendencies more secure, which would give people far more certainty when considering investments. And we also heard calls to make sure that we were more open to new entrants. And again, this would correct existing injustices and could help with climate change given how innovative new entrants often are.

### **Considering future funding and community land ownership**

- The Commission in our internal report highlighted the need to consider the future of agricultural funding after 2024. There's an opportunity to put a just transition at the heart of this and support farmers. We had a lot of calls from people to increase the amount of land that is under community ownership. The argument here is that greater levels of community ownership will mean the benefits of the transition will be felt by communities across the country.

## **Challenges**

### **Encouraging engagement**

- The first challenge we pinpointed was engagement. The first step to making sure that no one is left behind is to try to take as many with us on the journey as we possibly can, and that's common sense. This means that we need a mindset change in agriculture, where farmers respond to what the market wants. It used to be just food, now along with the high quality local food that everybody wants, its increased biodiversity, it's flood prevention, it's clean air, clean water and public access. The solution is continued education throughout the sector talking to our consumers and listening to what they're telling us. Helping new entrants and those with new ideas, get started and trying to help all farmers see how they can be the solution to the problem, not the cause.

### **Creating a clear road map**

- The second challenge is then direction to get where we are going. We all need to know exactly how we're going to get there, and as people have said, there's a huge amount of good work going on in the policy area at the minute and it's fantastic, but it will all need to be drawn together at some point and a clear road map produced for the whole of Scottish agriculture to follow.

## Improving communication

- The third challenge is communication. Once we know where we're heading and the plan on how to get there, we're going to need to clear, honest and specific guidance on what we all need to do as individuals, as business owners, as communities and as an industry so that everyone knows exactly what's expected of them and what benefits they're going to be rewarded with.

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**Mads Fischer-Moller:** Professor in Food Policy, *SRUC*

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- I've been asked to share some experiences from the Nordics. Before I started as a Professor at SRUC, I was the leading food policy advisor to the five Nordic governments in their collaboration.

## Supporting alternatives running in parallel

- I think one of the main challenges that I've seen when I've come to Scotland from abroad is are we actually asking the right questions and it's not to say anything necessarily bad about all the work that is being done, but let's look at the Suckler Beef Climate Group report. It shows us that if we do certain things we will be able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40%. A recent comparison of life cycle assessment and carbon emissions of two different food stock stuffs, falafel and tenderloin shows that tenderloin has approximately 100 times more greenhouse gas emissions than falafel. So even if we reduce the emission from the tenderloin by 40% it would still be way more efficient to eat falafel. I'm not saying that we should not eat tenderloin, but I think that we should pay a little bit more attention to alternatives so we don't focus solely on reducing emissions within our current structures, but looking at how we can reduce emissions within current structures and how can we support at alternatives running in parallel?

## Norwegian and Danish paths and direction of travel

- Are the Nordic countries good at this? Well, the dark side is that the Nordics are actually among the top ranking on human development, but we are disaster for the environment. We have the highest greenhouse gas emissions almost in the world. So it's not to say that the Nordic countries have all the solutions, but I'll just show you 2 examples. In Norway they have a report that shows if you want to reduce emissions the most cost-efficient emission mitigation you can do in the whole of the Norwegian economy is to eat less meat and waste less food. But that's just such a hard truth to reconcile with in a country where you're struggling to produce enough food from bad soils and where almost all of the food cultures are based on meat. The debate hasn't really settled on a transition path. We have these fighting discussions between the climate engineers and the farming communities, saying sustainability and not climate should be the policy focus. So to be honest, in Norway there isn't really a path

forward or road map that can show us good trajectory towards resolving the climate problems in agriculture.

- Denmark looks a bit different. There is agreement not only on the direction of travel, but also goals. There's a clear, net zero target. There is a 70% target for farming by 2030, and there is a public private partnership driven by government, but co-written and co-sponsored by industry, that lays out a detailed plan to get there. Business is already embracing an agenda that is not just within the status quo.
- For example, Arla the biggest dairy cooperative in Europe and by far the biggest food producer in Denmark has embraced a net zero emissions target and they say they don't know how to get there at all. But they know that they will reach net zero by 2050. The board of directors at Arla have said that when they first looked at net zero seven years ago it was at net zero for energy consumption. Now they are looking at net zero for all of Arla's activities. They can see this is the direction of travel for the whole of the world and Arla will be important in contributing to that. The board director said that if he could make as much money on milking oats as you can on milking cows he would, but he needs to make money, he is a businessman. There is potential for a vision that says we are not abandoning the cows but we can do both simultaneously. We have to work not only within the current constructs but also create alternatives next to the existing ones.

### **Changing diets**

- In Denmark, there is a huge paradigm shift in what's feasible politically. From January 2021 we can just see what the government is asking us to eat is completely different, we must increase tenfold the amount of pulses in our diets. We have to reduce our meat consumption by 50%. That was completely unheard of politically to even mention that seven years ago when I was advising government. Now this is the policy because the big businesses are also seeing this is the future, or at least this is part of the future.

### **Supporting shifting regimes**

- I would say the big challenge is how can we support the regime? How can we support the mainstream? How can we support all the businesses that are there and who we want to be there? But when we are hit by repeated shocks, Brexit, climate change, health crisis, how can we also help those businesses in the regime to change their practice and how can we support the little businesses underneath all the new ideas so that we can have 1000 flowers flourish?
- We can achieve tremendous success for what once was the niche. For instance, in Denmark we can see organics is having an increasing share of the market as well as whole grain which was once a niche phenomenon. We can really see that with the right kind of policy infrastructure, you can support the niche and push the mainstream so that both can flourish and we can write the benefits of the innovations that we want.

### 3. Questions and Discussion

**Pete Richie:** I just wanted to ask people a little bit about the presentation from Steven and the presentation from Mads because it seems to me that there's a big dilemma there. It feels that what Steven and Andrew are trying to do is to evolve the present structure of basic payments, which is completely inequitable, it's pointless. There's no way of evaluating basic payments, they don't do income support and they don't drive change. So, trying to evolve that into something that's a little bit better. And at the same time we have got a climate nature emergency. What Mads is saying is we need to look at a change of pattern, not just a change within pattern. And I suppose our concern would be that we move because it's less painful to an evolution of the current farm support system over the next 2-3 years and we take in a farm support system that's fundamentally not fit for purpose, that isn't driving change and then what may well happen is that market forces actually overtake the situation and we leave farmers high and dry because we haven't actually bitten the bullet and taken them with us on the much longer journey we need to take them on.

**Steven Thomson:** Part of the issue is that there needs to be some kind of just transition and if we change policy wholeheartedly in 2025 you have to have a transition period and the model that we've been talking about allows us the flexibility to evolve that into fully conditional payments. And the more I hear about ELMs, the more I realise that we're not so far away from ELMs. It's just that the delivery mechanism is different. So the tiered conditions that we talk about is that if you're not actually delivering on climate or biodiversity you end up with very, very low payments, and you probably can't justify your current existence and maintaining the status quo. And then the transition box that I talk about that is about transitioning into new innovative ways of doing things and doing things differently, so I don't think we're a million miles away from where you think you are. It's just I'm thinking about how to transition from the existing system, which I agree doesn't deliver effectively on the environment and it does produce food, whether it's the right food? We export so much of our sheep meat, we export an awful lot of our beef. All of these are big emitters in terms of carbon, but those are the structures we have. Those are the industries we have just now, and we need to somehow have that transition period.

#### **Microsoft Teams chat**

**Steven Thomson:** I do agree with Pete that the market and financial institutions will drive change - and likely do it faster than policy can in some sectors - those combined effects will drive change. As others mentioned demand change can drive the production changes on our lands - as Mads pointed out changing consumption behaviours is achievable in the medium to long term.

**Lorna Dawson:** Farmers/producers will respond to demands and are generally very innovative and collaborate on the best ways forward, while working with nature, knowing their land.

**Mads Fischer-Moller:** I pretty much agree with Steven. And as a former civil servant, I'm also a realist and I also think that it's really, really important that this is not going to be a discussion as in Norway, where the farming community is withdrawing from the recommendations because they are too foreign and too far away from where they're at. But actually we can see that these two things can evolve alongside one another, and just as an example, Denmark is still part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP is

probably one of the worst thought out policies I know of and you have a good opportunity to actually stay away from that. These things are happening while Denmark is still in the CAP but it just recognises that the CAP is just completely meaningless in the light of the changes that we're facing. So we need to produce something as an alternative. We would all love to see the CAP be the vehicle that drives a change. It won't, but then we have to reinvent. And what I will say is we need to expand our toolbox in developing the transition and the alternatives and not only focus on the things directly to the farmers but focus maybe a little bit more on how we can use the market forces to drive us towards positive change. How can we help create the markets that we need for the product that we ought to produce and we want to produce?

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**Heather Anderson:** As I was listening to all of this I was just very conscious of the fact that the UK Internal Market Bill will enable any producer in the world to challenge what they can see as trade distorting subsidies, and it also prohibits preferential procurement of local food. A number of the speakers talked about protection of subsidy and just transition and local food supply chains. And I just wondered how seriously the threat of the UK Internal Market Bill provisions are being taken, because it wasn't mentioned and it actually threatens our ability to continue to provide subsidy to Scottish farmers if it's challenged because the subsidy levels are different from the UK levels, and it also restricts our rights of manoeuvre in terms of giving preferential procurement rights to local food.

**Lorna Dawson:** I would just say that, what certainly is happening in Scotland and as mentioned earlier, the five farmer-led groups who are coming up with solutions to these issues are very much aware that they want to work to get solutions, and they're getting evidence and they're making sure that they are working together. The five groups collectively are meeting up and their gathering evidence, scientific evidence, opinions all in the context of a trade, and in the context of what's being produced on the farm. But we know that we're moving towards 2025 and it will be over that time that that will be worked out, so that it will be evidence-based decisions. It won't be anecdotal or opinion, it will have evidence at the very nature of the decisions so that any future payments can be based on sound knowledge and evidence.

**Kate Rowell:** The Just Transition Commission did not look at the Internal Market Bill at all. It came later on during our term but with my QMS hat on I would say it's quite obvious to me that during the lockdown, when consumers had the chance to buy local foods and it's labelled in supermarkets and butchers, many of them are keen to do that. They really do want to support us, so I think a lot of what we have to face going forward is to try and make sure that people do have that choice and also at the same time try and make sure that they understand why Scotland is different and why local produce is the best to choose. So it's a case of making sure that the labelling's clear, and also making sure that they understand the production systems that we have here. And I think that a lot of consumers in Scotland are behind us on this. They really want to help and they really understand things.

**Mads Fischer-Moller:** I think it's a good point to keep in mind. My recommendation based on what I can see in the in the Nordic countries is that that the countries that are outside of

the European Union and can support the local foods directly do not seem to have the best innovations. If you can actually work on driving the change that people already are interested in and not least work on what we've learned during lockdown and that that kind of reappreciation of the local foods. Work on that market and be better at selling your good quality stuff from more money. It's been staggering for me to see how cheap really good food is here in Scotland and there needs to be some kind of discussion around how we can make sure that that the farmers are who are really putting in an extra effort to produce excellent food can actually sell that at a premium. There seems to be a lack of diversity in terms of how much can you take for a piece of meat here.

**Ian Macdonald:** As well as internal market, you've got to think about the World Trade Organisation when thinking about local food procurement when thinking about local procurement and local sourcing because the UK are signed up to those as well as the rules of Internal Market Bill. So there are there are potential limitations there.

**Steven Thomson:** I've raised the Internal Market Bill a number of times, in different forums and quite often people don't bite and I actually do think the Internal Market Act is a real challenge for us potentially going forward. We don't really know what challenges are going to come, whether that's on support or whether that's on procurement or local foods. And that's going to be more of a challenge than that WTO because to go through the process of WTO challenges take forever and whether anybody's got energy to do that against Scotland I don't know.

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**Davy McCracken:** More of an observation, but some of the panel might like to comment upon it. We've heard a lot tonight that we're needing to move from our current agricultural policy, towards a more sustainable land management. There's a need for transition in doing that or going through that phase. We need to instil more behavioural change not only in our land managers and the supply chains, and not only the consumers, but also in the policy makers to achieve that. My observation is if we keep talking about a post-2024 agricultural policy that is not signposting the direction of travel we want to move in, we should both here and outwith here especially be talking about post-2024 land management policy. Otherwise it just sounds as if we are actually perpetuating the same old same old.

**Andrew Moxey:** Personally, I think we should be talking about land use policy. Or you could go further and say ecosystem services delivery policy if you wanted to be all encompassing. But I think this kind of goes back to answering Pete's question. Whether what we're proposing here is sufficient remains to be seen, but I would still argue it's necessary. You've got to start somewhere and this is a journey that we're all trying to go on, let's get some momentum going. Like the graphic with the cans, if we just keep kicking the can down the road, we're not going to achieve what needs to be achieved and it's just going to get harder.

**Steven Thomson:** I just came from a meeting this afternoon where the future direction and signalling to the industry was first and foremost in the thoughts of everybody's mind and trying to actually talk about what pathways we might achieve. The main focus of the farmer-led Hill and Uplands group to date has been on peatlands and trees and biodiversity, it's not been on food production. So there's this understanding that land management actually has got an integral role to play way beyond the normal scope of what the farmers and crofters may be dealing with.

#### **Microsoft Teams chat**

**Lorna Dawson:** People are now accepting we must deal with climate change and biodiversity loss, and trade unlike a decade ago. So we will have to deal with multiple land use decisions through integrated land use planning.

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**Sue Whittle:** I've found everything really encouraging this evening. I wear an animal welfare hat, but what I really wanted to ask is... There's obviously a lot of talk about sustainability and the way I look at sustainability is to look as if you're talking about animal products, is what the animal itself has been fed, and I'm just wondering what the opinion is of salmon farming from the point of view of sustainability. My understanding is that salmon are fed a mixture of soy and also wild fish, and I think that's a real concern and I think it's quite unfair in a way because I think a lot of farmers get a hard time from when they're producing beef and lamb. But really, I think we need to be looking at aquaculture, intensive pig production and intensive poultry production because these are the categories of animals that are being fed soy and products that are unsustainable. Whereas if we're rearing animals to high standards of welfare on grass, which people can't eat anyway, and we're planting trees and incorporating that in with agroforestry, which could then help with agritourism I think that's the kind of way forward that we that we need to think about, so I just wondered what the speaker's opinion is of that.

**David Thompson:** We don't represent the aquaculture sector or indeed the farming sector as a whole so I can't speak to the feed issue. I think the interesting issue for manufacturers and processors who I can speak for is their supply chains and it's also the same issue for retailers, which is, what does my supply chain mean? And what are the values and ethics and everything that sit behind that? So I think as there's more awareness of net zero, there's more awareness of environmental issues. Then the things like what we feed our animals, what inputs are going in will become more and more part of our customers buying decisions. We've seen this over the past 10 years where we've had a complete change in people's attitude towards plastics in/on food and we're seeing this in the rise of flexitarianism, veganism, vegetarianism and these are not seen as threats but actually gives us different ways that people engage with food and bring more of what they believe are the right values and ethics to that. And I think as soon as the supermarkets work that out there's a probability that they will be pressuring all the way down the supply chain to make sure that questions about inputs and how animals are raised can be answered. You see this in clusters at the moment for example around palm oil and sustainable palm oil, the Marine Stewardship Council and at some point that will have to kick into gear on some of the issues that you raised.

**Mads Fischer Moller:** One thing we haven't really talked about today but which is quite clear for me when addressing this question in particular is also human health and we can see from a dietary perspective that Scots are eating too much meat and too little fish. So in addressing this question it's also important consider for instance where do we put the soy needed for feed and from a human health perspective it's actually better to put it in a in a salmon than in a pig. Of course, we aren't machines and we aren't just fed fuel, but we have to keep that in mind when we're making our planning decisions. I agree with David and think there's a huge development potential here. I know that in Norway, one of the other big salmon producers of the world, they're experimenting hugely in how they can start to create a completely new industry feeding the salmon. They want to have salmon industry substitute the oil industry that is going bust, by a tenfold increase in salmon production in Norway. How can they do that? They can't do it with soy, so they need to find some other ways and that that releases a whole new innovation boom towards sustainable potential new feeds for the salmon. And at the moment for instance they are looking at pine needles and then feeding those to bacteria that is fed to insects that is then fed to salmon. So those kinds of really cool innovations are very likely if you're starting to really dig deep into one of these challenges.

#### **Microsoft Teams chat**

**Steven Thomson:** But we can bio-refine grass to extract proteins etc

**Lorna Dawson:** But we also need to be careful in planting the right trees in the right soil in the right places

**Abigail Williams:** Mads Fischer-Moller & Sue Whittle (Guest) potential to utilise food waste with insect bioconversion for animal feed ...

**Mads Fischer-Moller:** That is possible, Abi. Currently the problem is EU legislation on use of bi-products. It could be interesting to look into, because EU is wasting a lot of waste-streams that could go into the food system based on legislation designed to avoid another mad-cow-disease outbreak.

**Pete Ritchie:** Some of Sue's points eg on sourcing salmon feed relate to the Scottish Government's trade policy where it is looking at supporting environmental and other principles within the powers it has

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**George Milne:** I don't believe it is in Scotland's interest to see breeding sheep and beef cow numbers reducing in order to help deliver climate change benefits. It concerns me some of the things that Mads has said about reducing meat consumption and reducing cattle numbers that will help the climate. I don't believe that's in Scotland's interest. So my question really is, with tree planting targets sitting at 12,000 hectares per annum and going up to 18,000 hectares per annum, biomass plants requiring vast amounts of arable area to fuel them, pressure on land for development and housing and also the beef sector and the sheep sector or the red meat sector has a climate target to deliver on food and drink for Scotland's ambition of doubling output to 30 billion, does the panel believe that we really

have enough ground to deliver all these ambitious targets whilst delivering on climate change?

**Kate Rowell:** It's a big challenge and that's why we're in endless forums talking about this. It's not going to be an easy thing to do. But when it comes to sheep and cattle, 80% of the land in Scotland is not suitable for growing anything else that we can eat so we then have to decide what we're going to do with that land and the one of the best things for biodiversity is keep those animals on the land. We obviously need to plant more trees, but I don't think any of us really want to see big blocks of conifers where there is no biodiversity. We need to work out ways where farmers can plant small amounts of trees next to rivers to help with flood prevention, to act as shelter belts. From my personal perspective, I think what every farmer really needs someone or several someones that will look at their farm as a whole unit and to advise them about the best things to do in each part of land so that you put the right tree in the right place so that you're keeping the animals in the right places, that they are as efficient as they can be as healthy as they can be. We do have to communicate and collaborate and that's how we're going to get there. And I think we actually have a moral imperative to produce as much food here as we can to feed our own people. And if we have lots of rain and lots of grass, then we are the ones that should be producing the meat, not bringing it in from other places where they don't have those natural conditions that are just right for what we do best here.

**Mads Fischer-Moller:** We need to do two things simultaneously. We need to improve the current system, but we also probably need some kind of transitioning, not abolishing sheep and meat and dairy, but acknowledging that consumers want something else. Modern day consumers want something that we can also see that other farms are not. It is hard to make a living from the farming that has been the heritage farming in Scotland for generations and increasingly consumers are also curious to something else. There is a risk that we will be the ones left behind in development where in 30 years time you can produce sheep meat, beef meat or something that resembles that in a factory a 10th of the price of that meat that is being produced at the moment from the Highlands. So I would say we need to focus on strengthening the market for the very good quality meat that can be produced here. And we need to make consumers pay that extra that actually pays for the ecosystem services so we can do the things Kate tells us about planting the trees, the right place and maybe going towards some new farming practices. And then I would assume there will be some land use change where we will see less land being used for farming. That's not just in Scotland, but that's overall in the world. It's not just Scotland dealing with these issues, it's everywhere. And to be honest, all the all the eight Nordic countries are using Kate's argument. Well, we should be the one producing the meat. I've never really heard a government that doesn't say that they should be the ones producing the meat. If all the governments around the world are saying that we're just really not reaching anything that resembles global solidarity and solving the climate crisis.

**David Thomson:** Really interesting question, George. And it goes back to what Lorna was talking about, which is the complexity of issues and the complexity of solutions that are being offered around climate change, agriculture, food and drink. I have a real concern that none of these bits are talking to each other particularly well. We've been talking in the food and drinks sector, about how much forestry can one net off to excuse our production along with everybody else in the entire world who wants to buy a bit of Scotland's forest. I don't have an answer but just to just to say I actually share your concern. I think that the policy landscape

is so dense and complicated here that the likelihood of it creating perverse incentives is quite high and I think that's the bit that we need to watch out for and really consider every policy incentive without being paralysed by that in terms of the overall picture.

**Steven Thomson:** I suppose there are an awful lot of complexities in this with regards to future land use. And I suppose if you're going to prioritise, then trees are going to sequester at some rate peatland restorations going to stop emissions at a very fast rate, and then of course when you start looking at their emissions, cattle and sheep are up there with the big emitters in agriculture. Now some of the work Andrew and myself have been doing behind the scenes with the Suckler Beef Group is actually about how do you reduce emissions yet maintain the level of output that maintains the food production that maintains the economic activity. So instead of doing more better, it's actually producing the same from less in terms of technical efficiencies etc. Do we have enough land? Well, you and I probably know that a lot of the high hill that used to be covered in sheep in the 80s and 90s with headage payments and very large numbers of sheep that that's kind of gone. So we do have lots of areas where we probably have very minimal activity, and we could probably do more from those areas with regards to biodiversity, more sympathetic and Highland cattle grazing or Galloway grazing. And we shouldn't be resistant to change constantly. I see it initially within the farmer groups that I've been discussing with, but very quickly what comes is an understanding of the issues and I think people are now seeing opportunities to do things differently, but the key to this is how we actually encourage more sympathetic woodland management things at smaller scale rather than always going for the big scale projects.

**John Scott MSP:** I would say it's a crowded landscape having been a long time in the landscape of Scottish agriculture and the environment. And we're going to need to really work very hard in an integrated way to get all this climate change and food production matters resolved.

#### **Microsoft Teams chat**

**Lorna Dawson:** Livestock farming delivers to so many other areas such as landscape, carbon sequestration, catchment management, etc etc

**Heather Anderson:** Agree with Kate, independent advice to farmers to innovate and survive

**Angela Lamont:** Agree whole heartedly with Mads - there IS a demand to move away from meat. As with the Arla CEO "I can milk oats as well as I can milk cows"

**Lorna Dawson:** not all meat is equal....and a small amount of good quality meat protein in ones diet is good and our grassland is most suitable for livestock farming

**Davy McCracken:** If farming systems across Scotland do not change, then not only will they not deliver against environmental goals for wider society BUT just as importantly their own farming systems will not be viable in the future because of the impacts of climate change. As we have shown at our upland research and demonstration farms at Kirkton & Auchtertyre, hill farmers can integrate different land management into their systems and still remain farming:  
<https://www.ruralbrexit.scot/innovation-in-upland-livestock-systems-sruc-hill-mountain-research-centre/>

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**Lorna Dawson:** I was just wanting to add in that we haven't talked much about communities yet and a lot of these issues are not just about the production of the product, but it's about what happens in that environment, working with the local people, providing jobs. So we can't look at any one thing in isolation and it's very much about rural policy. It's about recovery, so we must consider how we bring the communities along with all of these issues.

**Jane Atterton:** Just to pick up on Lorna's point on rural communities. I think this issue of integration and bringing everyone together is really critical and it's not something that's new. It's something that's been talked about for a long time. But how do we do that? We've got for example, the Scottish Rural Parliament going on at the moment. I don't know how much of these types of discussions are happening at the Parliament, but how do we get all these voices in the room and solve this problem once and for all?

**John Scott MSP:** I actually believe that for the future, Scotland needs people in our landscapes and it's how get the people in the landscapes and also agreeing as Jane has said on the best way forward.

**Pete Ritchie:** I think it's great we need to get people together to discuss these things, but we need to underline principles to guide those discussions and I think the Welsh Future Generations Act is very useful. I think if we just get people in a room and talk we will keep having the same conversation. We need some big picture guiding principles for those conversations. The Welsh Future Generation Acts is about six or seven years old now and was an act of the Welsh Parliament that is really enshrined in law. The wellbeing of future generations had to be taken into account in all sorts of public decision making, and there are five principles.

**Kate Rowell:** The Just Transition Commission were very intrigued by the regional land use partnerships and the potential that they could have to tackle some of these. I think personally the pilots that are about to start are going to be really critical in this. If we can get them to work well and for people to listen to each other and collaborate and communicate and all the usual things, then they could be a real force for good. And I think it's quite critical that we get these set up properly that they have strong governance that we have good representation from all different parts of the community who are interested and we get those going right because I do think that there could be a real force for good if they're done properly.

**Lorna Dawson:** These partnership pilots are really going to show the way, and it's showing that we're getting integration of policies in Scotland for food, land use and communities. And one of the examples of where communities can come together is where they apply for a joint energy resource and that has worked really well. At the basis of all of this is cooperation and collaboration and engaging people. It's engaging them effectively so that they are part of the process, so that together it will make sure that we become vibrant communities so that we've got employment. It is vitally important to have jobs for people so that they stay in these areas and they keep the communities vibrant. And that's what we need for the rural areas of Scotland.

**Mads Fischer Moller:** In Denmark my native country, there aren't many people in the landscape so there aren't many good examples to draw from there. But I just saw a comment in the chat that sometimes new innovative businesses, in this case smaller scale horticulture, can actually provide a really good business opportunity in the landscape. Sometimes I think what I've seen in Scotland is there seems to be a little bit of a romanticisation that the only way you can then populate the landscape is by preserving what's already there. Whereas there might be huge opportunities to attract new people to the landscape. There is a Norwegian farm that I know of and they just took 1% of their farmland because a girl wanted to do some vegetables on this High land farm and she then made a revenue from that plot which was 26 times higher than the year before doing sheep. So repurposing just a small bit of our land toward what we actually ought to eat when it comes to, for instance, horticulture could perhaps be providing some new opportunities.

**John Scott MSP:** I think that's a very good perspective. I used to be terribly worried about the Malthusian prospect and the world's inability to feed itself, and I have to say I even wrote a paper for our party on it in 2008. But since then I do actually think with vertical farming and all the different innovations that there are out there, particularly in in the Netherlands I don't actually think we do have that problem anymore, so diversification is always going to be one of the answers.

**Mark Shucksmith:** Picking up on your theme of needing people in the landscape, I would like to publicise an event which is the Rural lives webinar. Jane Atterton, Jayne Glass, Polly Chapman and I've been working for about 18 months on a project looking at peoples lives through the Rural Lives Project, focusing particularly on financial hardship and vulnerability in rural areas. We have an event on Monday the 22nd of March between 10:00 and 12:00. You can book it free at the link that I've just put up in the chat room. You can find out more about the project on our project website [rurallives.co.uk](http://rurallives.co.uk). So if you want to discuss more about people and keeping them in the landscape, there's an opportunity.

### **Microsoft Teams chat**

**Sarah Skerratt:** Future Generations Act Wales <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

**Vanessa Halhead:** Small scale intensive horticulture production gives a bit opportunity to provide local food locally. But there are apparently no financial supports open to such producers, making it hard to make a viable income, and small scale pieces of land are very hard to access for innovative young producers

**Lorna Dawson:** <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/about/facilities/advanced-plant-growth-centre-0> and consider new technologies like vertical growth units and urban agriculture

**Steven Thomson:** Polycarb tunnels popping up all over the W Isles when I was up there in August last year

**Mark Shucksmith:** Rural Lives Webinar to coincide with the publication of the report "*Rural Lives: Understanding Financial Hardship and Vulnerability in Rural Areas*": Monday 22nd March, 10-12am. Book (free) at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/rural-lives-understanding-financial-wellbeing-in-rural-scotland-tickets-143956035377>

**Pete Ritchie:** The Good Food Network in Highland is taking a serious look at glasshouse production using renewable energy to supply med veg to H&I.

**Steven Thomson:** The role of multi-employment / multi-sectoral reliance in many of the rural (esp remote) areas is important and connection to land - either directly working in it or indirectly reliant on it for work is likely not really fully understood yet or acknowledged - and that includes everything from crofters, to farmers, to gamekeepers (on both game and conservation estates), to foresters to tourism businesses, to trades, to sawmills, to food processors, to suppliers, etc, etc.

John Scott MSP (who had taken over the Chairing of the meeting from Jim Hume MSP during the discussion session) closed the discussion by thanking all speakers and participants.

#### **4. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting**

John Scott MSP informed the group that the minutes of the previous meeting required approval. The previous meeting took place on 8th December 2020 on 'Rural Recovery: Economy and Communities'. The Secretariat circulated the unapproved minutes to the membership/ mailing list and these were also posted on the page for December's meeting. Jim Hume proposed the adoption of the minutes as a true record of that meeting. The approved minutes will be uploaded to the CPG area of the RPC website shortly.

#### **5. Final meeting of the Parliamentary session**

John Scott MSP informed the group that as there is a Parliamentary election this year, all Cross Party Groups will cease to exist at midnight on 24<sup>th</sup> March. We will wait to see if this CPG is re-registered following the election and if it is you will hear more in due course.

John Scott MSP thanked all of our speakers for great presentations and thanks also to everyone who has attended and asked questions. John Scott MSP also thanked Jane Atterton and the RPC Secretariat for their support in coordinating the CPG.

On behalf of the Secretariat Jane Atterton thanked John Scott MSP for chairing this and many previous meetings and extended a broader thanks to everyone who has presented and participated in all of our meetings this session going back to 2016. We have covered a wide variety of topics. Don't forget all of the information is available on the Rural Policy Centre pages ([www.sruc.ac.uk/ruralpolicycentre](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/ruralpolicycentre) under events) - great resource on all of these topics.

We look forward to seeing everyone (maybe even in person!) soon.