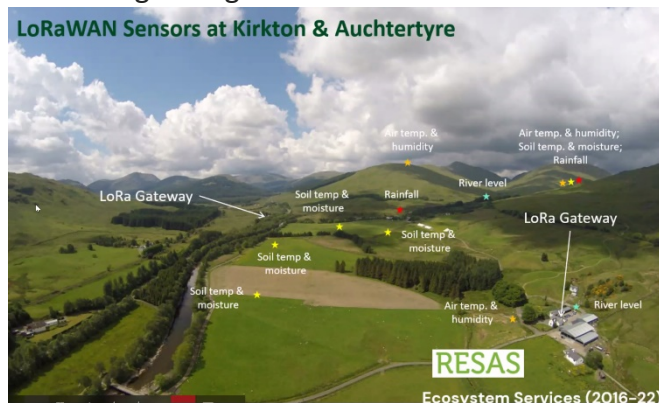




SRUC - Euragri Webinar #1 on Rural Entrepreneurship in Delivering Sustainable Farming and Food Systems

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) hosted the first of three Euragri's 2024 webinars on the role of rural entrepreneurship on March 12, 2024. The 90-minute webinar can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/935366835/c665365d5b>

Three presentations each highlighted a different aspect of rural entrepreneurship and innovation. Prof Davy McCracken, SRUC (<https://www.sruc.ac.uk/research/research-facilities/hill-mountain-research/>) spoke about the growing critical role of new and innovative technologies in upland research in delivering not only flock management but also the emerging range of ecosystem services. The new services uplands can deliver include biodiversity, flood mitigation, peatland restoration, woodland creation, and pollution mitigation. He described how technology assists data collection that will underpin future farmer payments for delivering these such services.



Jeremy Leggett, CEO of Highlands Rewilding (<https://www.highlandsrewilding.co.uk/>), described the entrepreneurial and innovation ethos that has driven the company to help rewild and re-people the Scottish Highlands by increasing carbon sequestration, growing biodiversity, creating green new jobs and generating sustainable profit for purpose. The company collects and uses data to build trust in its natural capital monetisation. A Highlands Rewilding's innovation is one that works best with generally smaller rural communities that increasingly become company members. Local communities have a special "pride in place".



The World Economic Forum's gaea (giving to amplify earth action) initiative has invited Highlands Rewilding to become an exemplar of the initiative as it believes rewilding is at the core of designing the new generation of partnerships the planet needs.

Jackie Brierton, CEO of Growbiz (<https://www.growbiz.co.uk/>), spoke about the free support services they provide to people who are considering becoming self-employed or starting or growing an existing small business or social enterprise in rural Scotland. She outlined the range of micro-enterprises they have supported. The challenges in rural compared with urban areas include increased transportation costs, a lack of digital connectivity, and access to talent, magnified in remote or less populated regions of Scotland. The support provided by GrowBiz includes one-to-one support, learning sessions, peer support meetings, networking, and mentoring. It also includes access to REDS (<https://www.reds.scot/about>), which aims to make every small Scottish rural and island business visible and to stimulate community, collaboration and connections across various rural micro-enterprises. GrowBiz provides positive evidence of the results of providing support to foster entrepreneurs and innovators.

Virtual PA
Illustrator Plumber
Forest bathing Wine retailer
Carer Coffee roaster Book shop
Web designer Cosmetics Artist
Baker Gin producer Yoga teacher
Marketing Hypnotherapist Chocolatier
Animation studio Gardner Architect
Sustainable clothing Catering Accountant
Photographer Cooking school Sauna
Artisan burgers Gourmet Mushrooms
Wildlife tours Nutritional therapist
Granola Guest House Traslator
Campsite Personal trainer
Sustainable toys

The webinar was moderated by Prof Wayne Powell, Principal and CEO of SRUC, in his summary at the end of the webinar said he was particularly encouraged by the optimism shown by the three speakers in the future of rural Scotland and said the entrepreneurial and innovative activities indicated that they are not just technological but much broader. Wayne also commented on the clear community sense of place in rural Scotland that promoted and supported entrepreneurs and innovators, which was highlighted in the three presentations. He also noted the requirement for institutional innovation in delivering sustainable farming and food systems.