**Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland**

**Implementation Steering Group Meeting**

**Friday, 19 March 2021, 10.00 – 12.00pm, Teams**

#### AGENDA

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| **Item** | **Topic** | **Lead** | **Timing** |
| 1. | **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**Attendees:Alana McGuire (SDS)Amanda Fox (SG)Andrea Glass (SDS)Andy Leitch (CONFOR)Bill McMillan (SOSE)Claudia Rowse (NatureScot)Colleen MacLean (DYW)David Reid (HIE)David Richardson (FSB)Derek McDonald (Aberdeenshire Council)Elaine Ellis (SDS)Henry Graham (Chair)Jackie Brierton (Growbiz)Jane McCormack (SG)Julia Latto (SE)Katie Fox (SDS)Katie Killen (SDS)Klaus Mayer (Education Scotland, left at 11am)Liz Barron-Majerik (Lantra)Lynne Gilchrist (Borders College)Muriel Mackenzie (SG)Seamus Spencer (SFC)Stuart McKenna (STF)Tom Hall (Colleges Scotland)Apologies:Andrew Docherty (SDS)Marc Crothall (Scottish Tourism Alliance)Donna Fordyce (Seafood Scotland)Eddie Abbott-Halpin (UHI)Bryan McGrath (SOSE)The Chair began by introducing the agenda and speakers. | Chair | 5 mins |
| 2.  | Minute of Last MeetingKatie Fox then went on to discuss and update on the key action points from the last meeting including:**Action:** Partners to feed in any additional comments around the section on covid impact – Progress: Katie hasn’t had much back, so it seems as if partners are happy.**Action:** The ongoing ask around the comms group in relation to the case studies – Progress: Katie will discuss this further later on regarding how gaps will be filled, and case studies will be pushed out, this is progressing well.**Action:** The ask to capture activity from college sector – Progress: Lynn, Tom, and Seamus have been feeding in and action is progressing.**Action:** Pleased to say we are piloting a bulletin in land-based, number of news stories – AD has sent out email giving consent to receive bulletin**Action:** Making sure partners are happy with the update report with regards to both our collective and individual contributions – Progress: so far partners have been feeding in and this is progressing well. KF will be in touch with those who haven’t spoken to check you are happy with report.**Action:** Production of a short summary for the Cabinet Secretary, Fergus Ewing– Progress: Katie has been working with Muriel and condensed the report into a two-page summary re rural skills, this has been gratefully received by SG.**Action:** National Transition Training Fund rural project – Progress: Katie has been working with Julia and this will be reflected on the update report, Katie would also suggest that Julia can do session this at the next meeting.**Action:** Rural toolkit – Progress: Katie has been working with Sheena & Anabel at Lantra on the toolkit and Henry Graham (Chair) is doing the foreword for this. The final draft is close to completion and now we need to get a launch date agreed.**Action:** Tom, Graham and Liz to follow up on challenges that providers are having – Progress: Tom and Liz looking to setup workshop to identify best practice and take this forward.*All happy with Minute from previous meeting.* | Chair | 5 mins |
| 3.  | **Building a secure pipeline for the future**KM discussed the DYW Live Programme which aims to help young people get some experience of work in the absence of being able to have employers in the classroom.KM set out the vision of this programme as being a termly offer of partner provisions with the key topics of employability, skills, and career pathways. It was important that the engagements were live and they were initially delivered through teacher accounts, although later they had to switch to individual pupil engagement with home schooling and full-lockdown, this presented some challenges.KM also discussed that delivery was a joint effort between Education Scotland and eSgoil with a DYW Live coordinator facilitating the programme. The pilot ran from January 2021 until now. In practice, a brochure was produced, and teachers could decide what topics and session they wanted their pupils to do.KM talked through a sample of the topics and sessions that would typically be delivered, for example, Virtual Code Art, and Making Subject Choices. There was engagement from both secondary and primary pupils.Overall, the sessions were very successful with a high number of registrations, and with engagement from over 40 partners, including employers and third sector, 30 of which then went on to deliver sessions. Initial estimates suggest that the programme has a reach of over 4,000 learners, with 150 individual lessons delivered.Next steps:The programme is going into a second phase now, planning is currently underway, and the next phase will run from April until June, with about 30 current offers from partners to deliver sessions (including Lantra). Moving forward, the programme is planning a whole year programme for the AY 21/22.KM stressed that this programme could be of real interest to the groups and emphasised that partners are welcome to join and offer to host a session or multiple sessions.**Action: If you would like to deliver a session, get in contact with Klaus, he will pass on your detailed to the relevant contacts and get you started with the session.****Questions / comments:**Comment - Chair: The Chair gave thanks to KM for his presentation and commended what had been achieved, noting that this group could really add value to the programme, along with the Industry Champions.Comment – **Liz Barron-Majerik**: The team at Lantra has really enjoyed being involved.*Question –* ***Katie Fox****: What is the process for partners to get on the programme?**Answer –* ***Klaus Mayer****: If you email me directly, I will then pass you on to DYW coordinator, who will then talk you through what you can do and how this can be achieved. All you need to do is come in with an idea, it can be a one-off session or an ongoing, 8 week session, or a shorter number of sessions, there is a lot of flexibility.**Question –* ***Jackie Brierton****: It is really inspiring what has been achieved, we were approached by local DYW who had spotted a gap in encouraging young people in rural to think of self-employment as a career and more exposure to micro-businesses, is there anything along those lines in the programme?**Answer –* ***Klaus Mayer****: Thanks for question, we had elements of that mostly through Scotland’s Enterprising Schools and the Enterprising Academy, nothing specific from self-employment or such an employer involved. A little has been done, but could grow, I will note this, If the DYW regional group is interested, very happy to link in.***Action: Claudia will pick up with KM raise awareness of nature-based jobs****Action: Katie will ensure this is shared widely across a range of sectors.**Following Klaus’s presentation and discussion, Colleen MacLean from DYW West Highland briefly explained her role and the role of the DYW coordinators, highlighting that the West Highland Regional DYW Group is linked in with the Chamber of Commerce, giving it good links to employers. Recently, the DYW West Highland team had employed nine new school coordinators, CM emphasised that this was a really great resource and would make a meaningful difference to young people.CM discussed that the key responsibilities of DYW include developing school and industry partnerships, promoting apprenticeships and helping with employability skills. The addition of having the school coordinators was a recommendation of the Young Person’s Guarantee (YPG). The coordinators will likely not be in schools until after Easter.After discussing her role and the role of DYW more widely, CM then went on to explain a number of positive things happening in rural areas currently including:* Quick adaption to online delivery which has received positive recognition – The online delivery for the Highland area was shared as best practice across Scotland.
* The events that have been run have focused on the rural sectors that are thriving such as Aquaculture, Health, Construction and Tourism, and Outdoor Adventure.
* Virtual work placements have been secured with global employers, giving young people the chance to experience work with employers worldwide.
* Pre-covid data showed that more young people wanted to work in the area, DYW are working with businesses to look at long-term recruitment strategies to encourage young people to stay in rural areas.
* There are real opportunities to grow entrepreneurship within rural communities – DYW will be getting small business leaders into schools to show the opportunities available to young people.

CM ended by highlighting the importance of partner working and welcoming any support from partners.**Questions / comments:**Comment – **Amanda Fox**: I want to congratulate our colleagues on the DYW team in their success in pivoting to online delivery. It’s also great to hear about the diverse audience. There is a point to make about case studies and how they add value in bringing to life what has been achieved, any that can be used, shared, and promoted are very valuable.Comment – **Henry (Chair)**: It is important to keep developing and emphasising the contribution of young people in rural areas.Comment – **Klaus Mayer**: Agree with you on that, just want to pick up on accessibility and I liked the point about virtual work experience, I would be interested in how this is working for you, we are about to publish virtual delivery guidance.Comment – **Colleen MacLean**: Thank you and appreciated, would be delighted to discuss.Comment – **Chair**: Thank you, very happy to have you here and involved. | Klaus Mayer (KM), Education Scotland Colleen MacLean (CM), DYW  | 25 mins |
| 4. | **Update Report**KF began by explaining that she was going to give an update on developments since the last meeting in December. KF emphasised that the current focus is on making sure the report is right before we progress this and come up with an executive summary. Further, KF discussed that we want to be in a position to tell a really compelling story about the progress that we have made and the importance of partner working, whilst recognising that this might have achieved in a different way due to covid.**Action: KF to prepare an executive summary of the report** At the moment, a consultation process is underway with KF speaking to partners to get your views on the report and discuss anything that might be missing. KF will get in touch with those who have not already spoken to her.KF gave thanks to those who have spoken to her so far, emphasising that the contribution of partners is much appreciated.**Action: any written comments on the report should be submitted by end of week March 26th and KF will incorporate them in.** Next steps: * KF will be looking at the format and design of the report with the design team, so may in touch re logos etc.
* Filling in the gaps, working on feedback, and also working on exec summary.
* The report will then go through SDS internal governance in April and following that we will work on a final version to go to the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board.

KF then used Mentimeter to ask partners: What do you feel the key messages should be [in the report]? Answers included:* Evidencing the key role that the ISG plays in providing leadership and providing partnership.
* Close connections to education remain central to progressing the rural skills agenda.
* Emphasis on the type of skills required for transformational change to reach net zero.
* The regional, place-based, approach.
* The importance of collaboration is critical.

KF will collate all comments and make sure that these come out strongly in the Executive Summary.Comment – **Tom**: Progress report is a great piece of work – Extensive and demonstrates the wide range of areas being taken forward by the ISG and members.KF ended by noting a few key points:* [There is a new blog on the webpage from](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning-alignment/skills-action-plan-for-rural-scotland/rural-scotland-blogs/islands-charter-the-storms-seonag-campbell-service-development-delivery-manager/) Seonag – we had a lunch and learn session to learn more about the Charters Approach, with Seonag leading on it.
* There are also upcoming blogs from Claudia and George, it is very welcome that partners are feeding in to their area of expertise.
* The bulletin is a different channel for us to communicate the projects we are involved in. The bulletins will be themed, with the first one being land-based. We are very keen for partners to suggest topics and suggestions re what you would like included.

**Action: Let Andrew know if you will be happy to receive the bulletin by replying to the email sent and share it with contacts. Topic suggestions are also welcome.*** Case studies are hugely important and inspiring, and we have said a lot about including and promoting case studies but we hadn’t previously landed on a way to collectively promote these. In response to this, we are going to trial a case study of the month initiative. Each month, we will have a themed case study, and will be looking for partners to put forward any of their own or partner case studies based on the theme, our comms sub-group will then decide on the case study of the month which we can then collaboratively promote on social media under #RuralSkillsScotland.

**Action: Partners to suggest case studies that fit into the themes of the month.****Questions / comments:**Comment - **Chair**: We are keen to stress that the bulletin will have coverage of a wide range of sectors, not just land-based.Comment – **Julia Latto**: I’d be happy to feed into Entrepreneurship comms case study through NTTF Redesigning Rural. Chair gave thanks for the update from Katie and introduced the Spotlight on Forestry Session. | Katie Fox (KF), SDS | 15 mins  |
| 5. | **Spotlight Session: Forestry** Andy Leitch:AL began by introducing the session and giving some background on the Forestry sector and its impact, including: * The sector contributes around £1bn to Scottish GVA, and the ILG aims to double this by 2030.
* Forestry currently employs around 25,000 employees across Scotland.
* We believe that as a sector, we are well-placed to contribute to a green recovery.
* Skills is a strategic driver for the key sectoral strategies including Scotland’s Forestry Strategy and Roots for Further Growth and the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland.
* The ILG group is very proactive with over 20 members.

AL then talked through some key issues and challenges in the sector:* The impact of covid -19 – Forestry has not been impacted as much as other sectors as a lot of work in the sector was deemed to be essential.
* Brexit has caused some issues as the sector is reliant on migrant labour.
* Aging workforce – Many older works who are nearing retirement.
* Talent attraction – People don’t necessarily see the sector as attractive, however, we have noticed post-covid there has been more interest.
* Many larger companies recruit at graduate level.
* One of the issues is how do we sustain microbusinesses as many of the contracts rely on keeping price low, therefore they cannot afford to invest to train people.

After this, AL discussed a report that was written in 2019 around labour market demand in Forestry, highlighting that projected recruitment would be around 2,500 between 2017-2027.AL then moved on to discuss some recent development in the sector including:* Jobs summit was run to help Forestry employers access funding through Kickstart and the YPG - scheme open until end of March and 16 companies have engagement with the scheme.
* Growing Rural Talent Programme – which is an entry pathway into the sector, with an 18 month pilot running in South Scotland, although looking to extend this to other parts of the country.
* Forestry STEM Ambassadors
* New guidance has also been created for those engaging with schools and career advisors to promote the forest industry.
* Forestry Induction Pack – induction document to support new entrants into the sector.
* Have updated T&T MA Framework including FMO.
* However, we need to get My WoW properly populated with more content re the sector to create a stronger web presence.

Elaine Ellis:EE began by introducing herself and discussed the Forestry Skills Action Plan (FSAP), highlighting the FSAP as being a document to help bring clarity to the focus of the skills group to allow us to the about our goals moving forward. EE pointed out that the FSAP was created just before covid, and despite the sector being one that has not been badly affected by COVID, there has been good opportunities around how we work and how we interact.EE then moved on to talking about sectoral context, discussing that the Forestry has a high number of self-employed workers and micro-businesses, which presents challenges for growing talent, but there is need to increase recruitment quickly in the sector. Skills challenges and opportunities in the sector include issues with strategic leadership skills and attracting and retaining a more diverse workforce.Further, EE explained that as the support mechanisms were emerging, e.g. Kickstart and the YPG, there was concern that this could be confusing to employers. SDS worked with partners to put a package together to provide a single point of contact for employers so that we could link in young people to Forestry.EE then discussed support for the sector moving forward including:* D&G council are going to act as gatekeeper and provide bespoke support to the Forest Sector.
* Had 16 notes of interest, but there were delays due to external factors, the roles are now advertised and expect to start people over the few weeks.
* Currently a work in progress, as young people come in, we will continue to look at training and pathways for these new entrants, including apprenticeships.

Liz Barron-Majerik:LBM discussed the Forestry STEM ambassador programme, introducing the programme with the aim being for every school in the UK to be able to access a forester when they need one.LBM talked a bit about the ambassadors, explaining that they come from a range of backgrounds, but actually locating them is difficult. The scheme allows foresters to be registered as a STEM ambassador, enabling them to be identified. Ambassadors get access to training and resources and provide support in a number of ways, this might include different activities, presentation, helping with career days etc.The aims of the programme are:* To increase number of foresters registered as STEM ambassadors
* To support induction and training
* To be able to map, track and promote them in the UK
* To help them create and share support materials

The scheme will be promoted, and foresters will be encouraged to take part.LBM then went on to briefly outline other projects that Lantra have been working on, including:* As part of the NTTF, Lantra have been working on the purchase of simulators as part of forestry training. The simulators help train harvesters and can get them most of the way there without the expensive machines on the farm being out-of-action.
* Lantra have also been involved in Forestry upskilling and reskilling project.
* Ringlink delivered mentor training and as part of that project, we produced an induction pack to help new entrants, copies are being distributed.

**Questions / comments:***Question –* ***Amanda Fox****: Question for Andy and comment for Liz, thanks to all for their presentations, very informative and great to hear about all the things that are taking place, I’m interested to hear Andy’s comment about micro-businesses and attracting young people, we have in other sectors the use of shared apprenticeships, is anything happening around that?**Answer –* ***Andy Leitch****: We did have a pilot which was run by Rural Skills Scotland that had some success but there were some challenges.**Answer –* ***Elaine Ellis****: At the moment, Phil Ford (SDS Skills Planning Lead) has a project looking into shared apprenticeships in the South of Scotland and it does cover land-based. We are looking at options, however, there are a lot of complexities and challenges around the shared approach.**Answer –* ***Andy Leitch****: In industry it is a challenge around how we support these people and industry have to be willing to put in resources.**Comment –* ***Amanda Fox****: Would be good to have an update on Phil’s work and Andy’s meeting with industry.* Comment - **Chair**: Ringlink are a cooperative and they carried out a shared apprenticeship pilot on land-based, there is experience there of how shared apprenticeships can work.*Question / Comment –* ***Amanda Fox****: Around Andy’s point about microbusinesses and tendering, in the F&D sector, there have been examples of a number of microbusinesses coming together as a cooperative to bid for larger contracts.**Answer –* ***Andy Leitch****: What I meant is that microbusinesses are successful in tendering, but they are pricing at a point where investing in an apprentice is not feasible.*The Chair gave thanks to Elaine, Liz & Andy for their presentations. | Liz Barron Majerik (LBM), LantraAndy Leitch (AL), ConforElaine Ellis (EE), SDS  | 40 mins  |
| 6. | Rural Scotland: An Evidence baseKK began by introducing herself and very briefly discussed the different types of products that SDS produce. There are two main types of product: * Regular release (for example the Regional and Sectoral Skills Assessments).
* Bespoke work (Which is tailored work for partners, for example, there has been recent work with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park to support Strategy Planning).

Importantly, in late 2019, SDS introduced a Rural cut of our regular release data in the [data matrix](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning-alignment/regional-skills-assessments/) (scroll to the bottom of the page matrix and select ‘Rural Local Authorities).KK talked through making the most of evidence, and how this starts with asking a question and examining the evidence that is needed to answer that, using the Regional Skills Assessments RSAs as a starting point to understand the latest labour market data. Alongside this, using your first-hand insight along with stakeholder validation is important. After this, appraising the evidence is important, assessing the limitations of the data and weighting it accordingly.KK then ran a Mentimeter poll, asking what would help the group utilise data more. Answers included:* A run through of how the data matrix works
* Being clear about date for updates
* Infographics
* More detail info on needs of microbusinesses
* Analysis of trends
* Case studies showing examples of data use

**Action: KK will pick up with KF later on comments around how to best address the suggestions. There may be a possibility of a lunch & learn session around this.**The chair gave thanks to KK for coming to the meeting and presenting.Due to time constraints, there was not as much time as anticipated for KK’s presentation, and KK offered to come back and expand upon this or do a lunch & learn session. | Katie Killen (KK), SDS  | 20 mins |
| 7. | Next meeting and AOBNo other business, next meeting is June 18th, should all have in diaries from 10am-12pm. The planned sector spotlight session will be around tourism. | ChairAll  | 5 mins  |
| 8. | Meeting close The chair closed the meeting by giving thanks to all who attended and presented. | Chair | 5 mins  |