## Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland

## Implementation Steering Group Meeting

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| **Date** | **Wednesday 9th March 2022** |
| **Time** | **10:00 – 12:00** |
| **Location** | **Microsoft Teams** |
| **Present** | * **Henry Graham (Chair)** * **Andrea Glass (AG) (SDS)** * **Ashely Woodhouse (AW) (DYW)** * **Bethany Handysides McKechnie (BHM) (SDS)** * **Chris Stockwell (CS) (SRUC)** * **David Richardson (DR) (FSB)** * **Derek McDonald (DM) (Aberdeenshire Council)** * **George Jamieson (GJ) (NFUS)** * **Greig Robson (GR) (SDS)** * **Jackie Brierton (JB) (GrowBiz, Scotland)** * **Katie Fox (KF) (SDS)** * **Klaus Mayer (KM) (Education Scotland)** * **Liz Barron-Majerik (LBM) (Lantra)** * **Lynne Gilchrist (LG) (Borders College)** * **Mili Shukla (MS) (SDS)** * **Muriel Mackenzie (MMack)(Scottish Government)** * **Seamus Spencer (SSp) (SFC)** * **Stephen Sheridan (SSh) (SDS)** * **Stuart McKenna (SM) (Scottish Training Federation)** * **Tom Hall (TH) (Colleges Scotland)** |

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|  | | Action |
| **1.** | **Apologies** |  |
|  | Amanda Fox (Scottish Government), Claudia Rowse (Nature Scot), Julia Latto (Scottish Enterprise), Marc Crothall (Scottish Tourism Alliance), Sharon Drysdale (SFC), Rona Campbell (Highlands and Islands Enterprise), Gary Legg (SOSE), Andy Leitch (Confor) |  |
| **2.** | **Welcome and Introductions** |  |
|  | The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a note of apologies.  The Chair gave an update on memberships changes and welcomed **Chris Stockwell from SRUC who will replace Graeme Ligertwood**, and **Ashely Woodhouse from DYW**.  Going forward, **Gary Legg will replace Bill McMillan** from the South of Scotland Enterprise and **Rhona Campbell will replace David Reid** from the Highlands and Islands Enterprise.  **Bethany Handysides McKechnie** **will replace Andrew Docherty** from SDS, and additional colleagues from SDS were welcomed to the call to give updates on agenda items:   * Mili Shukla (Key Sector Manager for Health and Social Care) * Greig Robson (Regional Skills Planning Lead, South and SE Scotland) |  |
| **3.** | **Minutes of the previous meeting** |  |
|  | All agreed with the minute of the previous meeting. Progress updates against actions were given as follows:   * Muriel Mackenzie is helping to identify relevant SG replacement on the ISG * Nick Sparks is looking to identify relevant comms and marketing sub-group representative * DYW live – Claudia and Mollie attended the DYW subgroup meeting. * KF will facilitate introductions between Klaus Mayer and contacts at SkillSeeder * David Richardson provided an update on the results from the 5th iteration of the HIE employers survey – the survey findings were circulated amongst members via email. * KF highlighted that minutes of previous meetings can be found on the [Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland webpage.](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning-alignment/skills-action-plan-for-rural-scotland/previous-minutes-and-reports-of-the-implentation-steering-group-isg/) |  |
| **4.** | **Update (KF)** |  |
|  | KF provided an update on communication activities associated with the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland:   * **A new newsletter was published in February 2022** - focusing on training opportunities (digital, creative, food and drink, forestry, and women returners opportunities) and showcasing local and national skills which would be open to those in rural areas. * **Three new blogs now published** - Gaelic language career pathways; Niall Provan piece about his experience as an apprentice (ties in with net-zero careers – thank you to Jim Ewing at Lantra for arranging this); and Rural Leadership blog from Julia Latto. * A new **weekly update is being circulated** highlighting rural skills opportunities and developments – KF welcomes feedback on frequency of weekly updates and its content. * The next iteration of blog posts will look at the recipients and their experiences of the services they have engaged with as well as partner work.   KF is currently exploring the development of a Microsoft Teams channel for information sharing and increased functionality between members of the ISG group. In addition, the Research and Consultation Subgroup are looking to develop a resource for information sharing where all new insights can be housed.  An update on the activities of the ISG subgroups was given:   * The DYW Live subgroup has met twice since the last ISG meeting. The group is exploring ways in which to raise awareness of DYW live offers with Careers information, Advice and Guidance staff. NatureScot and GrowBiz have expressed interest in the activities of the group. * The DYW Live subgroup recently shared information about “talk to a farmer week” - there will be live stream sessions with farmers across the industry. KF will share links to these sessions. * The Skills and Recovery Group was established during the pandemic and is revisiting the focus of the group.   The subgroups are an opportunity for people to get involved in subject areas where they feel they can make a change – allowing individuals to get involved and take forward actions outside of the ISG meeting.  **Action:** Anyone interested in joining the subgroups should contact KF.  The next SAPRS Update report will cover 2012-22. **KF will share the draft report with partners for comment and review.**  **Action:** Partners to review the update report for 2021-22.  The consultants who are leading on the evaluation of the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland are hosting a workshop for ISG members on Thursday 17th March 10:00 – 12:00 and members will receive further information about this. | KF  ALL  KF  ALL |
| **5.** | **Commission to Review Landbased Learning (LBM)** |  |
|  | LBM gave an update on the commission that has been established to review the Landbased learning, to arrive at a set of recommendations on how to attract more people (spec. young people and women) into the land-based sectors and to improve the learning pathways.  The review will look at a range of sectors from agriculture to peatland restoration. The review will also cover learning pathways such as early learning and childcare, DYW, lifelong learning, YPG, CPD and apprenticeships. Existing opportunities and pathways into sectors will be mapped, to understand any existing barriers.    Workstreams of the review will be centred around awareness and perception, delivery, exposure, place, and structure (SMEs and micros). The work of the review will be underpinned by three cross cutting themes – Equality and Inclusion, Fair Work, and delivering a Just Transition to Net-zero and a Climate Resilient Scotland.  The final output will be a report with a set of recommendations identifying the relevant interventions needed across learning pathways to support individuals into employment opportunities available in land-based sectors.  Aims and outcomes of the report are to increase the number of people entering the sectors across the rural economy and to increase meaningful employment and fair work, improving talent retention across rural island communities.  Stakeholder events will take place from May 2022 onwards and more information about events can be found on the commission web pages at [landbasedreview@gov.scot](mailto:landbasedreview@gov.scot)  **Action:** People can get involved by joining the commission’s ad-hoc group known as the ‘knowledge circle’, MMack is happy to provide more information where required.  JB asked if the review would explore enterprise and start-ups, and LBM confirmed that there will be a review of the existing support available for people setting up their own business.  Land-based hospitality and tourism also brings opportunities for entrepreneurship – but primary focus is land-based for the moment.  DM asked about some of the obstacles that have been identified already in terms of pathways into the sector:   * Higher geography: no study of climate change and modules are called ‘land-use conflict’. * Health and safety concerns also create a barrier in education. | ALL |
| **6.** | **Update on Scottish Childminding Association (MS)** |  |
|  | The Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA), with support from SOSE, HIE and SDS is running a targeted campaign to increase the childminding workforce across rural regions to promote professional childminding as a career option.  Phase 1of the campaign involves a recruitment campaign. Phase 2includes support for individuals to start-up their businesses.  SMCA will be using funding from the enterprise agencies to help childminders set up their businesses, ensuring that they are sustainable and resilient.  The campaign is in response to a survey conducted by the SCMA which found that the childminding workforce declined by about 26% in the past 5 years. This decline is experienced at a national level but is more pronounced in rural regions. The childminding workforce is also an aging workforce, and one fifth of the workforce is over the age of 35.  A key aim of the partnership is to support economic and community development in rural economies, by ensuring that individuals can participate in the workforce knowing they have childcare support. SCMA will engage heavily with local authorities to ensure that the campaign is targeted in areas where efforts are needed most.  The campaign targets a number of different rural local authority areas based on the insights and evidence from the skills audits and a number of local authorities in these regions coming forward.  **Action:** MS will share details when the radio campaign goes live.  JB added that the Perthshire network of self-employed care practitioners sometimes don’t see themselves as businesses, so they run into challenges. JB offered her support where required.  MMack is currently involved in research that looks at the barriers and challenges for school age childcare, and wanted to know if the campaign includes wrap around care? MS agreed that Childminders have a very important role to play in the wrap around care. The research aims to collate the views of young people and the providers, it will also explore self-employed individuals. MMack offered to link MS into the consultations with self-employed individuals if required. | MS  MMack |
| **7.** | **Recruit South of Scotland** |  |
|  | GR provided an update on a new recruitment support approach for businesses in the South of Scotland.  High vacancy levels across a wide range of sectors, and feedback from employers identified that many employers across the region are struggling to recruit/can’t find individuals with the rights skills. However, not all employers are struggling, and some are finding particularly innovative ways to recruit.    In addition, there are currently more individuals now on income support, higher than pre-pandemic levels, suggesting there is a pool of labour supply currently not being utilised.  A working group was set up to address labour shortages and recruitment challenges across the South of Scotland, which met twice at the end of 2021. A long list of options was discussed and assessed, with the preferred option being identified – Recruit South of Scotland.  Led by SOSE, Recruit South of Scotland aims to help employers recruit more effectively. SOSE and SDS have developed 2 tender specifications:   1. **Employer recruitment** (marketing of the programme) – not a great response, so this is going back to retender. 2. **Employer development** (the recruitment support) – HR consultancy type support – can you work with employers to help them develop attractive jobs, adverts, alternative ways to advertise opportunities, a recruitment toolkit (sit on a website, show them how to advertise jobs, show them how to use social media – if we can afford to deliver it over the longer term).   A contractor has been appointed for tender Spec 2 and will provide 1-2-1 support for 25 employers helping them to utilise good practice, social media and overcome their unique recruitment challenges.  The overarching aims of Recruit South of Scotland is for employers to ask themselves ‘why would anyone work here’ and understand the motivation that different demographics might have and tap into that.  Partners identified that Highland Council have a similar offer in the form of the Highland Employer Recruitment Offer (HERO), which is open to employers with less than 50 staff members.  In addition, the SOSEP funded Growing Rural Talent Programme successfully brought together employers, schools and people from local authorities to offer young people sustained learning throughout 5th year of high school. Key to that project was the collaborative approach.  KM identified that Education Scotland have been trying to build talent into sectors through formal education. The education system needs to be more creative. Under the current OECD review curriculum for excellence and looking at the senior phase it seems the time is right for looking at these changes.  JB added that a more creative approach to recruitment is needed by employers. It is easier to attract individuals to health and social care, by advertising it as a sector with self-employment opportunities where they have more flexibility. This can be applied to other sectors too and can work well.  If anyone has anything they would like to ask Grieg they can pick up with him directly - [grieg.robson@sds.co.uk](mailto:grieg.robson@sds.co.uk) |  |
| **8.** | **Update from GrowBiz Scotland** |  |
|  | JB provided an update on GrowBiz Scotland. GrowBiz Scotland has provided15 years of rural enterprise support and has grown year by year. GrowBiz currently has 24 contractors working for them, all of whom are self-employed themselves and run, or have ran, their own businesses in different sectors.  This means when a client comes along GrowBiz can usually find the right support for them. GrowBiz principles are centred around being flexible, empathetic and supportive (to name a few).  GrowBiz support Services:   * **1-2-1 support** – based on quick diagnostic of client needs and allocating them to correct member of team. * **Learning Sessions** – a range of learning sessions (4 or 3 every month, interactive, broad ranging, intermediate and advanced Instagram sessions) practical subject matters, identify anyone that might need additional help through these group learning sessions. * **Peer support meetings** – services in care and wellbeing, bookkeepers, and accountants. * **Networking events** – women’s focused networking and general networking at the end of each month on a particular theme open to any rural business. * **Accredited mentoring programme –** mentoring support and training. Has trained over 100 mentors since the programme started and consistently have c.15/20 relationships ongoing. * **REDS** – Rural Enterprise Directory Scotland – started in 2020 as a response to COVID. Began as a directory putting rural businesses on the map and provides wrap around support for businesses central to the future of the rural economy. |  |
| **9.** | **AOB and Date of Next Meeting** |  |
|  | The next meeting will take place on **Thursday 9th June 2022**  KF will explore the possibility of hosting the next meeting face-to-face. |  |