

RHET Volunteer Newsletter

A newsletter for all the volunteers supporting RHET across Scotland

Introduction RHET Executive Officer

As we move through another busy term and rapidly approach the end of the academic year, it is a particularly active time for RHET. None of this would be possible without the continued support, enthusiasm and dedication from you, our wonderful volunteers.

Thank you for everything you have contributed over this academic year. We hope you can reflect on the experiences you have helped provide for young people, recognise the positive

difference you have made and look forward to another rewarding school year ahead.

Thank you to all the contributors who submit the articles and stories in our newsletters, it is always great to discover what everyone is up to and gives some ideas to other areas of the RHET network.



Katrina Barclay
Executive Officer



NFU Mutual

RHET are proudly supported by NFU Mutual Charitable trust who donate much needed core funding to support our work across your RHET network.

Journey of Food - Story of Vegetables.

RHET's Story of Vegetables year is coming to an end but has stimulated even more growing projects than usual over our 13 areas.

Across the RHET network, a record nine countryside initiatives are running 11 growing projects this year! These activities directly help schools grow vegetables in class, mostly potatoes but also rhubarb, salad veg and peas. RHET Argyll & Bute decided to dip their toe into the water by running planting sessions with pupils from 6 schools at a Food and Farming Day and all 170 pupils went away with a veg pack sponsored by J M Breckenridge, to encourage them to also eat more veg.



Some RHET areas have historically run annual tattie growing with schools, RHET Angus CI never stopped after the days of Count And Grow, which some long-term volunteers may remember. The Angus Potato Project now involves virtual links into schools using Microsoft TEAMS. Holly Hume from McCain Potatoes runs these online planting sessions and this year has seen 87 classes taking part, more than ever before!

RHET Perth & Kinross CI goes all out as they have their own Potato Professor John Marshall! This year he has talked to 72 classes in 36 different P&K schools and the project has reached nearly 2,000 pupils. ISJ Potatoes supply all the seed potatoes.

Some RHET areas have had a good number of years not growing potatoes but both Ayrshire & Arran CI and RHET Clyde successfully piloted new potato projects this year.

AACI are growing potatoes with 50 primaries, telling the story of their special Ayrshire early potato crops and RHET Clyde's project involving 11 schools, will see their crops being tended over the summer holidays and harvested in October, rather than before the holidays like the other projects.

RHET Forth Valley and RHET Highland have had tattie projects running and RHET FV have also been doing a Pea Tour. A team of volunteers have been into 26 primary schools planting peas and exploring British vegetables with 1,400 pupils. The pea seed has been supplied by East Coast Viners and has also been available to all schools in Scotland by post through a request form on the RHET website. Nearly 200 packets of pea seeds have gone out to schools this way this year and we will be planting more with children that

visit the Discovery Centre during the Royal Highland Show.

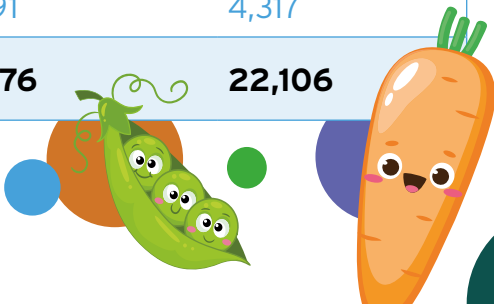
RHET Scottish Borders have been working on a new rhubarb project, developing resources to support 26 primaries in growing rhubarb from crowns supplied by Mertoun Estate.

RNCI piloted the pea project last year and this year 6 schools in Moray are taking part. They also have a massive impact with their Windowsill Garden Project, where classes grow salad vegetables in the classroom. This year 126 schools have been involved in this and it has reached over 8,000 pupils!

These projects are a good example of how you, as RHET volunteers along with the many companies, including Kettle Produce that sponsor these projects, can have such a wide-reaching influence on the school children of Scotland. Over 22,000 pupils in almost 1,000 schools have been growing with RHET this year!



RHET Area	Project	Schools	Classes	Pupils
Angus	Potatoes	34	87	920
Argyll & Bute	Potatoes	6	8	170
Ayrshire & Arran	Potatoes	50	46	1,036
Borders	Potatoes	59	53	1,200
Clyde	Potatoes	11	11	273
Forth Valley	Potatoes	?	46	1,305
Forth Valley	Peas	26	63	1,412
Highland	Potatoes	19	31	875
Perth & Kinross	Potatoes	?	85	1,958
RNCI	Potatoes	126	343	8,048
RNCI	Peas	6	12	592
Pea packets	Peas	191	191	4,317
Totals			976	22,106



Figures in blue are estimated based on the average size of a primary school class in Scotland (22.6 pupils)

RHET Local Area Updates

RHET Clyde

RHET Clyde have had a busy few months with Food and Farming Days held at Pollok Park, Glasgow with Glasgow City Council and local Glasgow schools and then by kind permission of the Ballantyne family at Auchenheath Farm near Kirkmuirhill with over 200 South Lanarkshire pupils.

Despite the lashing rain, it was a productive day. Quarter Primary said 'Fantastic learning experience for the children that linked directly into class learning on food and health. The learners used what they learned to make posters detailing possible solutions to fix the importing crises for food coming through the Suez canal (farmed and local food vs international processed food) and learners used their learning to make the experience in the class far more expansive.'

These days are only possible because of the funding received from the Scottish Government to run them. Here is Gavin Ballantyne discussing dairy production with the young people.



We welcomed our newest classroom speaker Rab Leggate from Hamilton, who spoke to St Patrick's primary in Strathaven. The school said: Two wonderful local farmers- the Leggates - visited my classroom in response to my request for an input from RHET during my Scotland topic.

It was wonderful and so interactive and engaging. They (the children) wanted to talk about it for the rest of the afternoon even once the farmers had left! So very successful! It was excellent.

So good that Rab came away with a box of biscuits for his effort! Knowing Rab's love of all things sweet, he'll be back.....

RHET Local Area

RHET Dumfries and Galloway

RHET Dumfries and Galloway have had a busy few months since our last update. Our two new project co-ordinators have been settling into their roles and have held two food and farming days, alongside other farm visits as well as consolidating their training. We must thank Stair Estates and Dumfries Mart for hosting our food and farming days, as well as all other volunteers who we have had the pleasure of working with since starting back in September 2025. It is shaping up to be a busy few months before the end of the school year with plenty of Farm Visits and Class talks booked in!

RHET Fife Kicks off 2026 with a Thrilling Start to Their Food & Farming Program

RHET Fife (Royal Highland Education Trust) has launched into 2026 with an exciting and educational series of Food & Farming events, engaging primary school pupils across Fife in hands-on, immersive experiences. After a fantastic start to the academic year, with three successful events already in the books, the organisation is set for four more events before the end of this academic year.

The new year kicked off in early January with an inspiring day at The Rhynd, Leuchars, hosted by the Foster family. A total of 95 Primary 6 pupils participated in a dynamic program covering a range of topics that gave them a deeper understanding of food production and the environment. Sessions included polytunnel growing, vegetable farming, beekeeping, wildlife crime, cooking with pork, scone and butter making, dairy production, and machinery demonstrations.

This event was swiftly followed by another successful day at The Den, Culross, where 151 pupils took part. Hosted by John and Audrey Stirling, students were introduced to an array of agricultural topics including dairy farming, beekeeping, vegetable production, beef & sheep farming, salmon farming, cereal crops, machinery, and, once again, cooking with pork. The event offered a well-rounded experience, connecting the next generation with local food and farming practices.



Next up was Bowhouse, St Monans, where 160 Primary 6 pupils from local schools were welcomed by the Balcaskie Estate for a day of environmental learning and agricultural exploration. Sessions on wildlife and the environment, vegetable planting, cereal production, dairy & butter making, beekeeping, livestock management, butchery, and even making vegetable crisps captivated the pupils, leaving them with a new appreciation for the role farming plays in our daily lives.

March Food & Farming day was a fantastic warm, sunny day at Lindores, Newburgh with 115 pupils from 7 local schools with one of the highlights being Davey the Clydesdale horse who was a big hit on the day.

"We are incredibly grateful to all the contributors who made these events such a success," said Carole Brunton, Project Coordinator for RHET Fife. "Our program is only possible because of the support from local farmers, businesses, and volunteers who share our passion for educating young minds about the importance of food production and sustainability."

RHET Fife is indebted to a wide range of industry professionals who ran sessions, including Kettle Produce, Police Scotland,



Fife & West Fife Beekeepers, Nelsons of Culross, Quality Meat Scotland, East Neuk Market Garden, Scotland the Bread, Stocks, Bowhouse Butchery, and many more. The tireless efforts of volunteers also ensured a smooth experience for the students, guiding them through each activity and ensuring safety and enjoyment throughout.

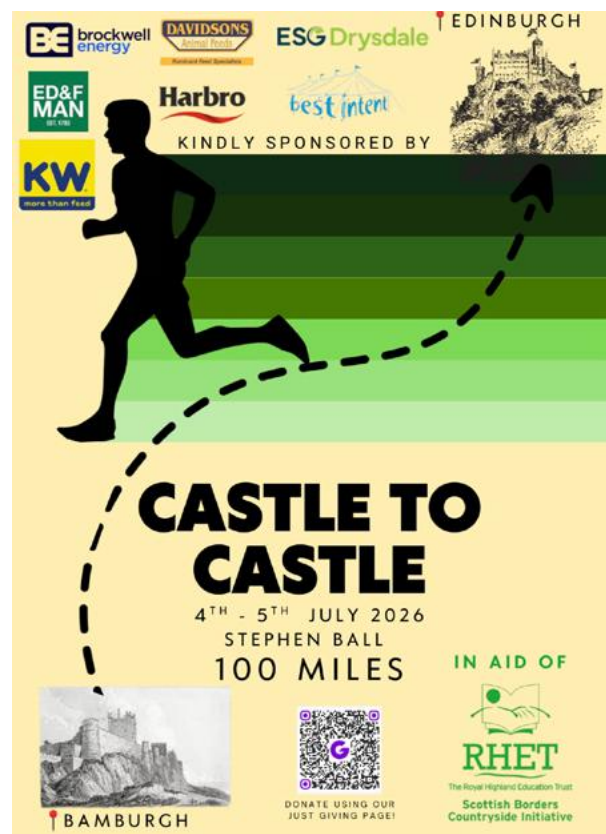
Looking ahead, RHET Fife is set to host four more Food & Farming events this academic year, with upcoming sessions at Balgove Larder, Droverhall, and Gilston Estate. These events will continue to provide invaluable learning experiences for local schoolchildren, helping them connect with agriculture in a meaningful way.

RHET Local Area

RHET Scottish Borders

Scottish Borders Volunteer Stephen Ball, is running the 100 mile Bamburgh to Edinburgh castle rat race in July, kindly raising funds for RHET Scottish Borders CI.

Anyone who would like to sponsor and support Stephen on his run can find a link to our brand new Borders Just Giving page on the attached poster. Blossom our coo is hoping to go along and support him on the weekend run with her new 'sponsors running vest' on - photos to follow!



RHET Network Updates

RHET Ayrshire and Arran CI

RHET Ayrshire and Arran CI are engaging with teams from Robert Burns Academy in East Ayrshire within the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI). This initiative is managed by the Wood Foundation. Four teams of S3 pupils are each bidding for the chance to direct a grant of £3,000 to RHET AACI through the YPI programme of teamwork, research and competition. Volunteers from RHET attended a Charity Carousel where they showed students how RHET's free education programme supports knowledge of healthy food sources, sustainable farming, countryside practices and youth career opportunities. Students were particularly interested to learn how the grant would enable pupils to experience outdoor food and farming learning and they are determined to put in a strong bid on behalf of AACI. We are eagerly waiting for the outcome of the bid process!

Clyde

Kris Paterson (Project Co-ordinator)

Kris has worked with RHET Clyde for 22 years, coming from a farming background and being an ex East Kilbride young farmer. With a past career in operations and financial management, she feels the RHET role is a mini version of this. As well as being part of the RHET Clyde team, she trains new project co-ordinators and enjoys the varied workload that RHET offers plus working in different RHET areas and meeting new people. Her hobbies are her 3 sons, swimming, the theatre and socialising.



Julie-Anne Leggate (Clyde Assistant)

Julie-Anne joined RHET as an assistant project co-ordinator in 2022 with a background in project management and working with young people. She grew up on a dairy and sheep farm in Ayrshire and is on a beef and sheep farm with her husband Robert Leggate. She is passionate about working with young people taking the classroom to the countryside, Farm to Fork and local produce. She is particularly keen working with those who have a disability to have the opportunities to be on a farm and see what real farming is all about. On her other days, she helps her brother to run the farm shop, Humeston Byre.

John Harvie (Clyde Chair)

I have been involved with RHET for over 12 years and I'm currently serving as Chairman and still have a hands on with talks direct to school children in the class.

Nothing can beat seeing the excitement of young kids, absorbing knowledge of something new that to us, as farmers, can be taken for granted.

Been brought up all my life on the family farm. Originally a dairy/beef unit before changing to all beef in 1998 and have been running it now for 42 years.

I am semi-retired from the farm and now drive part time for a local haulier, so if you're held up on the M74/M6 by a large articulated truck....!?

It's probably me....



I still have an avid interest in agriculture. Farming is definitely in the blood.

Other interests are Rugby, International football, Open water swimming, Music, fixing things, keeping the farm tidy and workable.

Dumfries & Galloway:

Joanne Hiddleston (PC)

Joanne joined as DGCI Project Co-ordinator in September 2025. Growing up on her family dairy farm just outside of Dumfries, Joanne has always had a passion for farming and the countryside. She has been an active member of Lower Nithsdale YFC for many years and in this time has taken on various committee roles. Following completion of her Mental Health Nursing degree, Joanne worked within Child and Adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) before deciding to return to her farming roots and joining RHET. Joanne is also currently a trainee trustee with RSABI which she thoroughly enjoys.

Since joining the team, Joanne has really enjoyed her role in educating young people on food and farming, and providing many of them with real on farm experiences that they have not had before.



Andrena McGill (West)

Andrena joined as Project co-ordinator for the West of the region in September 2025. Originally from Northern Ireland she moved to South West Scotland with her parents to a dairy farm in 1994. With a background as a Paralegal, she now has three young children at home and runs a beef farm alongside her husband James. The role allows her to ensure that as many young children get to visit a farm and experience what life is really like on one and get the children up close to the animals and machines - something her own children can take for granted.

Angus Kerr (D&G Chair)

Hi, I'm Angus Kerr and I am the chairperson of Dumfries & Galloway Countryside Initiative. I've been involved with DGCI for a number of years since returning home to farm some 14 years ago. My dad was one of the founding directors of DGCI and as such his passion for RHET has rubbed off onto me. Initially, I became a farmer volunteer hosting farm visits and doing classroom talks. Shortly after I was invited to join the committee and in 2024 I was appointed chairperson of Dumfries and Galloway. Since becoming chairperson I have had a busy 18 months having been involved in recruitment of 2 new project co-ordinators for the region as well as being on the organising committee for our fundraising ball to celebrate 21 years of RHET being involved in the region which was hugely successful generating over £38,000. We are very fortunate that we have an active and supportive committee in DGCI making my role as chairperson a lot easier.



My day job is a dairy farmer where I farm 2 dairy herds around 10 miles west of Dumfries with a total of 750 cows. Myself and my wife, Melissa, have 3 young kids (13, 11 & 9) who keep us on our toes and busy with being a taxi service to various after school clubs.



Lothians

Introduction to New PC

Hi, I am Sonia Watson, the new Project Co-ordinator for Lothians. My background is farming although I am no longer on a farm. I also have an education background for ELC children and have been a childminder for 21 years. I have a 13 year old son and I share the house with a house rabbit (Ellie) and a house mouse (Ziggy). I am also a rugby coach for our local Youth teams.

I have enjoyed meeting the committee and putting a plan into place of how Lothians will grow over the coming months, we already have some farm visits in the diary for this term. Plans for the local shows are also underway.

Royal Highland Show



Planning for the Royal Highland Show is well underway and volunteering opportunities are proving popular with most shifts already filled but still some gaps on Sunday.

We're delighted to welcome back QMS, Seafood Scotland, SP Energy Networks, Peatland Action and Salmon Scotland to the Discovery Centre this year. We're also excited to introduce a new activity provider, Lidl who will be tying into our Story of Vegetables theme!

Visitors can once again enjoy some much loved favourites including baking scones, milking Mabel, crafting activities and pea planting as part of our "Year of" Story of Vegetables theme.



Talk To A Farmer 2026

This annual event focuses on 15 different farms or businesses each year, giving schools the opportunity to log in and learn about them during a week long programme in March. We work closely with DYW Live on the project, whose technical expertise plays a key role in making the event possible.

Our RHET Project Co-ordinators produce a 15 minute video with each participant, I'm sure some of you reading this may even have taken part yourselves. DYW Live then brings these sessions directly into classrooms through three live broadcasts each day, which classes from across Scotland can join online.

Each session begins with the participant video, followed by a live Q&A using the TEAMS chat function, allowing pupils to ask questions in real time. This year there was a focus on veg, with this being the year for Story of Vegetables, but other areas were covered. Brussels sprouts, potatoes, broccoli, peas, beetroot and neeps were all features but there

were also sessions as wide ranging as wildlife crime, soils and farm shops. The most popular session was on lambing, which saw 71 classes online live. From Newcastleton Primary right down in the south of the Borders, to schools on Orkney and Sandness Primary in the Shetlands it was a truly Scotland wide event.

Overall school engagement this year was fantastic, with 432 registrations for the event. Not all classes will watch live, some register to watch the videos once they are posted on-line on the DYW website and classes don't just watch one session, you will often see schools popping up as attending a number of times over the week. DYW live estimates that around 10,000 pupils took part this year. These recordings and those from previous years are freely available on the teacher resources section of the RHET website.



National e-Learning Offer

