

# RHET Volunteer Newsletter

A newsletter for all the volunteers supporting RHET across Scotland

## Introduction EO/Chairman

Welcome to 2026 and thank you for all your support last year. We hope you have had some time over the festive period to relax and spend time with friends and family and look forward to working with you again this year to help educate young people across Scotland about food and farming.

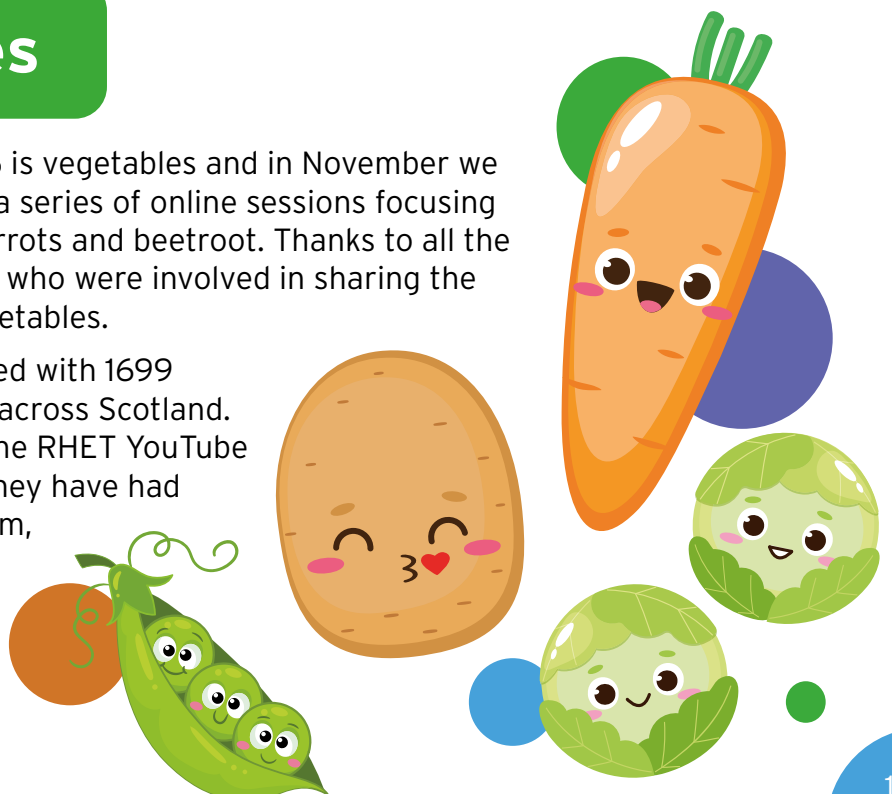
We had a busy end to 2025 with festive learning opportunities including making reindeer dust (more on this inside) and our [‘Carrots for Rudolph’s party!’](#) story read by Gary Maclean. Our vegetable theme for this academic year has also generated many new [resources for use in the classroom](#) so if you are looking at vegetables for any upcoming RHET sessions be sure and take a look.



## Story of Vegetables

Our academic learning theme for 25/26 is vegetables and in November we delivered ‘Meet the Veg!’ This involved a series of online sessions focusing on Brussels Sprouts, peas, potatoes, carrots and beetroot. Thanks to all the farmers and RHET project coordinators who were involved in sharing the stories behind each of the featured vegetables.

Over the course of the week, we engaged with 1699 pupils who joined live from classrooms across Scotland. Post event the videos were shared on the RHET YouTube [Stories of Vegetables playlist](#) where they have had many additional views. If you watch them, do let us know what you think.





# RHET Local Area Updates

## RHET Volunteers Spread Holiday Magic with the Reindeer Dust Project

Before Christmas, volunteers across the RHET network came together to bring a little extra sparkle to the holidays through our annual Reindeer Dust project. Designed to support festive learning in local schools, the project invites volunteers to assemble “reindeer dust” kits for schools – a fun, imaginative activity for children as they prepare for Christmas.

As usual, our teams put a special focus on sustainability. The reindeer packs were made using environmentally friendly ingredients, including Scottish-grown oats, helping children think about the importance of protecting nature and choosing locally sourced, healthy food. Volunteers also added creative touches and cheerful messages to make each pack feel special.

Once completed, the packs were delivered to schools across our communities, where teachers incorporated them into seasonal lessons and activities. The project not only brought joy to young learners but also offered a meaningful way to connect festive fun with learning about the environment and local produce.

Thanks to the enthusiasm and dedication of our RHET volunteers and our local sponsors, schools across the network were able to share this magical tradition while fostering awareness of sustainability and local Scottish food.

## Reinder Dust Project Impact

Area	Number of Packs Delivered	Schools Involved	Number of Pupils Engaged	Sponsors	Volunteer Input
RNCI	50	Aberdeen City (15 Schools)	1500	Hamlyn's	None
Forth Valley	122	103 (every primary school)	3700	Hamlyns, Carrs Billington, H&R Gray	Making up the kits
Angus	63	51	1271	Scotmid	2 volunteers
Argyll & Bute	9	7	186	CARRS Billington OBAN, Oban Christmas tractor run, Aldi, Oban	2 volunteers with delivery
Scottish Borders	85	All primary & Enhanced Provision Units (65 schools)	1100	Hogarth's & Asda	Making up kits and delivering to schools
<b>Totals</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>7757</b>		

# Fundraising



## Update from the Choir

The RHET Farmers Choir concert took place in November, where supporters from across the rural community gathered for an uplifting evening of music and helped raise over £7000!

Hosted in the warm and welcoming facilities of the RBS Gogarburn Conference Centre, the evening shone a spotlight on the outstanding harmonies of the Farmers Choir who sang a variety of well-known hits. MC for the evening Mr Bill Gray MBE, kept the gathered guests entertained with his music trivia and acknowledging the song sponsors throughout the evening performance.

Raffle prizes were donated from across the country and helped to raise £1830. Every raffle ticket purchase, every donation and ticket purchased contributes directly to delivering hands-on learning experiences, classroom visits, and farm-based activities that help shape the next generation's understanding of agriculture.

With £500k to be raised every year, events like this are just one way the trustees help to attract funds.

## Perth & Kinross Countryside Initiative RHET Guardswell Fundraiser Raises £22,000 to Support Agricultural Education

PKCI RHET is delighted to announce the success of its recent fundraiser held at Guardswell Farm, which raised an outstanding £22,000. This achievement reflects the incredible generosity and commitment of our local community to supporting agricultural education across Scotland.

Guests enjoyed an evening of exceptional hospitality, with food generously donated by local companies & farmers, showcasing the best of regional produce. The event featured a lively auction, offering unique items and experiences, which sparked enthusiastic bidding and contributed significantly to the fundraising total. Adding to the excitement, a casino provided entertainment and an opportunity for guests to support RHET in a fun and engaging way.



The funds raised will enable PKCI RHET to continue delivering vital educational experiences, helping young people understand the importance of food, farming, and the countryside. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended, donated, and volunteered their time to make this event possible.

## Fundraising

### D&G RHET Ball Raises £37,700

Nearly 2 months have passed since our charity ball, and we are still reflecting on what was a truly memorable evening. Over 340 sponsors, volunteers and supporters gathered to mark 21 years of RHET Dumfries & Galloway, while also raising vital funds to support the continuation of RHET D&G and to keep RHET free.

We are delighted to announce that the grand total raised was an incredible £37,700. This outstanding achievement will directly support RHET projects across Dumfries & Galloway, helping us continue to provide valuable food and farming education opportunities for school learners throughout the region.

The success of the evening would not have been possible without the generous support of so many individuals and organisations. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our main sponsors, Galbraith and Turcan Connell, along with David Allen for sponsoring the band and Highland Meats for supplying the beef.

We are also extremely grateful to all the businesses and individuals who donated prizes for our auction and raffle, as well as the many vendors who contributed on the night - from programmes and flowers to piping and photography. A heartfelt thank you also goes to everyone who attended and donated so generously, whether through the auctions, raffle, or general support.



Finally, special recognition must go to our **ball committee**. Their tireless work behind the scenes to organise the event and gather donations ensured the event was such a wonderful success.

We are incredibly proud of what was achieved and look forward to the next 21 years of RHET Dumfries & Galloway.



### RHET Forth Valley Christmas Tractor Run: A Festive Success

On Saturday 6th December, RHET Forth Valley hosted a spectacular fundraising Christmas Tractor Run that lit up the local community. The event proved to be a resounding success, raising an impressive £11,500 to support RHET's work in connecting young people with food, farming, and the countryside.

The festive convoy of tractors, driven by dedicated volunteers, brought joy to thousands of spectators who lined the route. Alongside the drivers, enthusiastic bucket shakers helped boost donations while soaking up the incredible atmosphere.

For the volunteers, the experience was more than just fundraising—it was about sharing in the excitement of the crowd. The smiles, cheers, and heartfelt reactions from the community made the event truly unique and rewarding for everyone involved.

This year's Tractor Run not only raised vital funds but also created lasting memories, reminding us all of the power of community spirit during the festive season.

## RHET Network Updates

### The passing of Jimmy Warnock

RHET Clyde and the wider agricultural community lost one of the best in the passing just before Christmas of Jimmy Warnock from Sandilands Farm in Lanark.

Jimmy, who had been a RHET Clyde volunteer for over 20 years, and with his wife Elizabeth, took thousands of children out to the farm over the years to look at food production and farming in Scotland, plus went into schools to take farming to them. Not only was he a volunteer farm host and speaker, he was a RHET Clyde director and a past National RHET Chairman.



Jimmy showed an infectious amount of fun and enthusiasm when educating young people about farming and the countryside in Scotland. As well as his passionate delivery, he was a great teller of stories and could relate to children of all ages. His non-stop energy often left the rest of us running to keep up.

Previously, in order to raise funds for RHET nationally, he decided to get sponsorship where he did the morning milking, jumped in the car and drove up north, ran up Ben Nevis, and the challenge was to be back in time for the afternoon milking! Of course he succeeded. This was typical Jimmy. Nobody could keep up with his boundless energy. He always had plenty of ideas for what we could be doing next as a charity, and had to be reminded there was only 7 days in the week. But to him, that was something to be overcome.



At the RHET Clyde committee meetings held at Sandilands, he would say 'I'll just be a minute', and nip out in the middle of the meeting to lamb a sheep, coming back to the meeting in time for tea and cakes! However, to keep that level of energy high, the standing joke was that wherever he went, he would eat everything on the plate and more! Including telling Princess Anne that if she 'wasn't going to eat that dinner, could he finish it?'..... He was a volunteer that many wished they had on their charity. He would turn up a food and farming day and be slotted in anywhere to talk about any of the topics, such was his breadth of knowledge. He was a great backup for any event.

Jimmy will be hugely missed by RHET and by the schools who constantly came back and asked for him. His humour and knowledge surpassed everyone's, and if there was ever a time to call someone a 'legend', it was Jimmy.





### **Ailsa Wilkie retiring from the Clyde committee after 20 years**

RHET Clyde said a fond farewell to their Secretary and committee member of over 20 years, Ailsa Wilkie from Blantyre. Ailsa had been the secretary of the area for her whole time with RHET Clyde, starting from when the group was formed in 2002. As well as running an outdoor children's nursery on the farm, Ailsa is a keen member of the farmers choir. Her contribution to RHET over the years was exemplary, she participated in classroom talks, held a farm visit and managed our fundraising events. Ailsa, only this week, won the Scottish 2025 Nursery Awards 'National Lifetime Achievement'. Ailsa was presented with a gift of theatre vouchers from the committee, her being a keen theatre lover. We wish her good luck in whatever she turns her hand to next, if she has time with all the dogs, the nursery and the grandchildren!



### **A New Arrival for Tara**

We're delighted to share some lovely news from our Perth & Kinross Countryside Initiative. Project Coordinator, Tara Clark, welcomed a beautiful baby boy in October. Tara and her husband Ian are now proud parents to Cameron Robert Clark, who is doing well and keeping them both happily busy.

Everyone at RHET sends their congratulations to Tara and Ian on this wonderful new addition to their family.



### **Sheila Nelson retiring from the DGCI committee after 12 years**

Sheila Nelson recently stepped down from the DGCI management committee after 12 years of service. Sheila is a retired Geography school teacher as well as a farmer's wife so was a great asset to our management committee in both having a good insight into how RHET activities can deliver key aspects of the academic curriculum as well as having excellent practical farming knowledge. Sheila carried out numerous classroom talks and assisted with Food & Farming Days. You'll now likely find Sheila on the ice as she is an avid curler! Many thanks for your dedication and support to RHET D&G over the last 12 years Sheila.



## Sara Smith

After 12 years with RHET, Sara Smith, our Learning and Development Coordinator, left her role in December to take up a new opportunity. During her time with us, Sara was a vital part of the organisation, playing a key role in developing our learning resources, delivering teacher training sessions, editing thousands of videos, and leading the rewrite of our website, among many other contributions.

Sara will be greatly missed. While her departure is sad news for us, it also offers an opportunity to reflect on the many initiatives and projects she introduced and the lasting impact she has had on our volunteers, learners and teachers. I am sure you will join me in wishing her every success and happiness in this next chapter.

## Meet Carol Littlewood (Angus)

Carol has been RHET ACI's PC since June 2009. She has worked on farms from 14 years old, experiencing dairy, beef, pig and arable sectors and went to Shuttleworth College, studying an HND in agriculture, then a specialist deer management course at Sparsholt College. Deer brought her to Scotland when, after two years on a deer farm in Yorkshire, she took the post of scientific officer on the deer farm at Glensaugh Research Station working for MLURI. They funded her degree in Natural Sciences through the OU and this sparked an interest in ecology and change of career - working for the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. FWAG folded in 2009 and she set up Littlewood Land Care, continuing her work as a Farm Conservation Adviser and also took on the PC role with RHET ACI. These roles complement each other, with some of her LLC clients now volunteering for RHET.



## Meet Amy Geddes and Bruce Christie

Bruce Christie has been involved with RHET from its inception, initially as a volunteer and then as a Committee member of RHET ACI, of which he has been Chairman since 2010.

Bruce is Farm Manager at Dalhousie Estates in Brechin, Angus, which is a very diverse business, ranging from intensive arable cropping and an Aberdeen Angus herd on the lowground to hill sheep production in Glen Esk. The estate also participates in environmental schemes, forestry, grows Christmas trees and has shooting & fishing enterprises.

Bruce explains "As a result of our varied enterprises visits to Dalhousie Estates can be tailored to specific topics or encompass a range of subjects. It is very fulfilling being a RHET volunteer, being able to inform children about the countryside and how their food is produced fills a vital role in their education. When asked, many will say that their food comes from the supermarket." He continues "RHET plays a vital role in encouraging young people into Agriculture and other rural jobs; we explain that there are many direct and ancillary jobs related to food production and other rural businesses. Another important aspect of farm visits or Food & Farming Events is to highlight how farmers look after the countryside and the environment, as there are often misconceptions about this."

"I would recommend, volunteering for RHET to anyone!" says Bruce, "It makes you feel really good to see the smiling interested faces and to feel that you have made a difference."



Bruce is about to stand down as ACI Chair and taking over is Amy Geddes, another long-term RHET ACI volunteer, who like Bruce helps out at the full range of events ACI holds, hosts visits at her farm and goes into classes to do talks. Amy is the fourth-generation of her family to farm at Wester Braikie near Arbroath in Angus and explains "We farm 320ha comprising seed potatoes, spring barley, winter oilseed rape, wheat and vining peas. We also have 25ha of farm woodlands, wildlife ponds, areas of species rich grassland, field margins in all our fields and mixed species hedgerows."

She continues "I am passionate about farming and nature and about sharing that with visitors to our farm. I started volunteering with RHET approximately 8 years ago after hosting my daughters' class for a visit to the farm. Seeing the fascination the children had for nature and growing things, as well as for the big tractors, was something I wanted to share more widely and RHET provided the perfect opportunity for me to do this."

"Learning hands on about food, farming and the environment should be accessible to all children and young people and I look forward to being part of the team helping RHET to deliver that opportunity across Angus."







### Meet Jane Cameron (Ayrshire & Arran Project Co-ordinator)

Jane joined RHET in 2023 with a background in food and drink and volunteer experience in youth training and development. She enjoys working with schools to increase knowledge of Food and Farming.



Jane is grateful to the RHET volunteers from farming and countryside communities who give their time to work with local schools and support RHET events in Ayrshire and Arran.

This year Jane has supported RHET AACI fundraising and volunteer social events such as the Open Stock Judging at Ayr Mart.



### Meet Scott Dewart (Ayrshire and Arran Chair)

Hi, I'm Scott, I'm 34. I have been Chair for RHET AACI since June 2025. Along with RHET AACI, I am a Higher Agricultural Officer for the Scottish Government & I also manage a herd of pedigree cattle.

In the little spare time I have, I am an avid cyclist & also a keen walker, having set myself the challenge of a full Munro round by the time I am 40, which this year has shown me may be a bigger challenge than I thought, having only managed to bag 7 so far, leaving me 247 to go!

I have enjoyed my time so far Chairing AACI and getting to know all our volunteers better and even managing to recruit some new ones along the way!

The year of Veg is going to prove a learning curve for me, as it is a side of the industry I have never been involved in, however I am thoroughly looking forward to the Year of Eggs, as it relates back to my MSc which involved looking at dietary factors & stress levels in laying hens!

## Upcoming Events



### 2026 Royal Highland Show

Volunteering with RHET at the Royal Highland Show is one of those experiences that stays with you long after the gates close. I went along thinking I'd simply be helping out for a day – but I left feeling inspired, energised, and proud to have played a small part in something genuinely meaningful.

From the moment I arrived, the RHET team made me feel welcome and supported. There's a real sense of purpose behind everything they do, and it's infectious. Throughout the day, I helped guide school groups and families through hands-on learning activities, answering questions, pointing out displays, and encouraging children to explore the links between farming, food, and everyday life. You don't need to be an expert – just willing to get stuck in and share your enthusiasm.

The best moments were the little ones: watching a child grind flour for the first time, helping another one match vegetables to the crops they come from, or seeing a teenager suddenly realise that milk doesn't just "come from the shop." Those moments of discovery are what RHET is all about, and being part of that feels incredibly rewarding.

Of course, part of the magic is the Show itself. Being surrounded by livestock, machinery, food producers, and proud rural communities reminds you just how important farming is to Scotland. As a volunteer, you're right at the centre of it – meeting people, answering questions, and helping bridge the gap between town and country.

By the end of the day I was tired, a bit hoarse, and absolutely delighted I'd signed up. If anyone is thinking about volunteering with RHET at the Royal Highland Show, I'd say go for it. You'll learn new things, meet fantastic people, and make a real difference in helping young people understand the world of food and farming. It's an experience I'd gladly repeat – and one I'd recommend to anyone.

The theme for our activity this year is vegetables and we look forward to welcoming back previous show volunteers as well as welcoming new faces! Interested in joining us?



### Crucial Crew (Scottish Borders)

All Primary 7 pupils across the Scottish Borders will once again take part in Crucial Crew, the long-standing multi-agency safety event running over three weeks from late January into early February. The programme, organised by Scottish Borders Council and Police Scotland, gives pupils a series of interactive sessions designed to help them recognise risks and make safe choices as they transition to secondary school.

Crucial Crew previously ran for around 25 years, becoming a much-valued part of the school calendar, before being cancelled due to lack of resources. After identifying a continued learning need, Scottish Borders Council has now been able to reinstate and fund the project following a break of roughly five years—a welcome return for a programme with proven impact.

As part of the event, RHET Borders delivers the Farm Safety module. These sessions cover vital rural safety themes including machinery and tractor awareness, staying safe around cows and calves, understanding farm dog behaviour, hazards around stacked bales, and safe access to the countryside.



Each topic is taught using practical, realistic scenarios to help pupils understand the risks they may encounter in farm and rural settings.

A Project Co-ordinator and a RHET volunteer attend each day to guide pupils through the farm safety set and support hands-on learning.

Crucial Crew's return marks a significant step in strengthening safety education in the Scottish Borders, equipping young people with the knowledge and confidence they need to stay safe at home, in their communities, and throughout the countryside.



### Talk to a Farmer (Coming Soon!)

We're excited to share that Talk to a Farmer is just around the corner! This special event will give pupils the chance to step (virtually) onto farms across Scotland and see what life is really like for the people who grow our food.

Here's how it works: volunteer farmers are putting together short films about their farms – showing everything from caring for animals to planting and harvesting with a focus on vegetables this year. After watching the films, pupils will get the chance to chat with the farmers online, asking their own questions and hearing stories straight from the source.

It's a wonderful way to connect classrooms with the countryside, spark curiosity, and help young people understand the hard work and passion that goes into farming. Farmers are looking forward to sharing their world, and pupils are gearing up to ask some brilliant questions.

We can't wait to see the conversations unfold – it promises to be inspiring, eye-opening, and lots of fun!