

SLE Annual Conference - Gearing up for change in rural Scotland

Sponsored by: 

Confirmed Speakers

David Lee, David Lee Media & Events Ltd – Conference Host & Chair



David Lee has hosted 250-plus events over the last decade, from large policy conferences to intimate round-table discussions. He re-shaped his business quickly after the enforced changes of Covid-19 and has already hosted more than 20 online conferences and webinars.

He worked for daily newspapers for 20 years, latterly as Senior Assistant Editor of The Scotsman, before establishing his own business in 2009. As Director of David Lee Media & Events Ltd, David is a writer, editor, communications consultant, event organiser and event host. He is increasingly focused on online event hosting and podcasts. David works for public and private sector clients UK-wide and has a specific interest in rural affairs and a detailed knowledge of forestry in particular. His other specialisms include legal affairs, data science, fintech and general public policy.

Keynote Speaker: Professor Dieter Helm



Dieter is an Official Fellow in Economics at New College, Oxford and Professor of Economic policy at the University of Oxford. He is Chair of the Natural Capital Committee. Dieter completed the Helm Review on *The Cost of Energy* for the British Government in 2017. Dieter's recent books include: *The Carbon Crunch - revised and updated edition* (2015), *Natural Capital - Valuing The Planet* (2015), and *Burn Out: the endgame for fossil fuels* (2018), all published by Yale University Press. *Green & Prosperous Land* was published in 2019 and his new book *Net Zero* will be published on 3 September 2020, by William Collins.

Graeme McNaughton, Barclays, Headline Sponsor



Graeme is a Chartered Banker with 36 years of experience and leads Barclays Landed Estates Team in Scotland.

He works with clients and their trusted advisors to structure banking solutions that suit the family and the Estate as a whole for a totally bespoke solution.

Mark Tennant, SLE Chairman



Mark's career has ranged from tending refugees to investment banking.

Until 2017 he ran Innes Estates, a 4500 acre low ground estate in Morayshire, the centre of which is Innes House, a 17th century Scottish Renaissance house where the family has run weddings and corporate events for over 20 years. He has now handed it over to his son.

Mark became SLE's Vice-Chairman Policy in 2018. His main focus over the past year has been developing its work on a post-Brexit integrated land management approach which delivers increased productivity as well as helping meet climate change targets.

In April 2020, Mark became SLE's Chairman at our online Annual General Meeting.

Gearing up to tackle climate Change - Session

Adrian Dolby, Head of Agriculture, Buccleuch



Adrian is Head of Agriculture at Buccleuch and sits on Buccleuch's Executive Committee. He has responsibility for strategy and investment across Buccleuch's in-hand farms, a diverse portfolio of crop, livestock, poultry, energy and environment schemes. He advises the Estates in agricultural and environmental policy and wider tenant engagement.

Adrian is an adviser to Astanor Ventures, a venture capital fund focused on investment across the agriculture and food value chain in Europe and the USA, specifically sustainable food and regenerative farming technology.

He has extensive experience in UK agriculture. Adrian previously led the Barrington Park Estate farms, overseeing their transition to conservation farming across scalable crop and livestock enterprises. He is a former manager with Velcourt in East Anglia, later moving to consultancy with Andersons in the agri-business sector.

Adrian studied at the Royal Agricultural College and completed the IAgRM Leadership Course. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Agricultural Management, a member of the Environment Group, chaired by Prof Dieter Helm and also of the SLE Climate Change Policy Group. Adrian is a former speaker at TED Global.

Ian Hope, Galbraith, Partner – Rural, Farm Sales, Valuations, AMC Finance



Ian is Head of the Galbraith Rural Department which serves a diverse range of clients from major companies to private individuals seeking advice and management of their rural properties. He carries out a range of professional work across the country, providing farm and estate consultancy, valuations and management of contract farming agreements. As well as being an AMC Agent, he also carries out farm and estate sales throughout Scotland.

Dr Sheila George, WWF Food and Environment Policy Manager



Sheila George is Food and Environment Policy Manager at WWF Scotland, with a particular focus on land use and nature-based solutions to climate change. Sheila completed postdoctoral research at Queen's University Belfast on climate change impacts in rural areas, followed by several years managing large scale habitat restoration projects, including peatland restoration and wetland management. For the last 6 years, she has specialised in land use policy in Scotland, most recently identifying practical and policy measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and maximise carbon sequestration through land use and management. Sheila is also a panel member of Farming for 1.5, an independent inquiry into the role of farming in meeting net zero.

Gearing up to tackle climate Change - Session

Stephen Young, SLE Head of Policy



Stephen Young joined SLE in August 2019 from the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society (SAOS), where he was project manager. In his new role, Stephen is responsible for managing SLE's policy team at its Musselburgh HQ, as well as leading development of SLE's policy positions and guiding the provision of member advice. Stephen studied Rural Business Management at Aberdeen University and went on to work in an assistant manager's role at the Borders Machinery Ring, dealing with member requests and purchasing farm inputs on their behalf.

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Food and
Environment

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Gearing up to diversify your business - Session

John Sinclair, Craigie's Farm and Farm Shop, South Queensferry, Edinburgh - a tenant of Rosebery Estates



John was born at West Craigie Farm in 1968 and has lived there ever since. There was never any doubt in his mind that he would do anything else apart from being involved in farming, although he now has to work harder and harder to still call himself a farmer! John and his wife Kirsteen set up and runs the farm retail and café business called Craigie's Farm Deli and Café.

Their vision is: *Craigie's is a family farm all about the pleasure of enjoying good local food with true provenance and taste. The way we see it, the simple pleasures in life are always the best.*

Alec Telfer of Broadmeadows near Selkirk



After 14 years livestock farming in South Lanarkshire, I bought the small 1400 acre estate of Broadmeadows near Selkirk.

In the past 28 years I have been sheep farming at Broadmeadows, I have brought it up from a very low place with broken down fences, neglected dry stone walls and poverty-stricken soil. It is now an optimum fertility, properly fenced well appointed unit.

However, having been a livestock farmer for over 40 years and not having a family who are natural farmers but love where home is, coupled with a health scare, decided it was time for a change. A big change and a new challenge, a move away from tradition and to follow my lifelong dream of creating something new and leaving a lasting legacy.

So now we have a newly established 650 acre highly diverse woodland with a commercial heart, and 200 acres of prime grassland which is rented out on a grazing agreement to 2 neighbouring enthusiast young farmers.

I have fully embraced the enhancement of the environment and made huge steps to contribute to the prevention of catastrophic climate change.

Jeremy Thompson, Managing Director, Forest Direct Ltd



Our focus is to plant more trees in order to sequester carbon and diversify farming and Estates businesses.

With 44 years in the Forest Industry starting as a forest worker to creating my own consultancy business I am really excited that forestry is now forging ahead in Scotland and in response I am building up a team that represents the older experienced foresters and a young, tech aware team members that will become the future. We are privileged to have Alec Telfer as our company ambassador.

My aim is to work with farmers and Estate owners to diversify their business to allow them to continue their stewardship of the land by creating new woodlands and managing existing woodlands to create a long term revenue stream which will provide security for the future.

This is achieved by planting new woodlands and by felling and restocking existing woodlands. We planted 1 million trees this year and have 1.5 million to plant next year. Our forward harvesting programme is 100,00 tonnes.

Gearing up to diversify your business - Session

Eilidh Smith, Managing Director, Morton of Pitmilley Countryside Resort, St Andrews



Managing Director of Morton of Pitmilley, Eilidh has 13 years of experience of operating a successful tourism business on a small arable farm. In this time the business has gone through continued diversification and growth, succession, change of entity and continues to prosper 30 years on. A previous career working and competing in high performance sport has equipped Eilidh with the versatility and resilience required to embrace the change that comes with diversification.

“Creating a canvas and embracing change” - Morton of Pitmilley, St Andrews the journey of a diversified arable farm to 4 and 5 star luxury self-catering houses and facilities.

Morton of Pitmilley diversified their small arable farm to create a canvas from which they run a successful tourism business with indoor and outdoor leisure activities. Woodland, biodiversity and creating an environment for holidaying guests to enjoy and relax in is at the heart of they do.

Yanik Nyberg, Director Seawater Solutions



Yanik Nyberg is the director of Seawater Solutions, an agri-environmental company based in Glasgow that turns degraded farmland around the UK and internationally into wetland and saltmarsh ecosystems for climate resilience. Growing popular crops like Samphire and Sea Aster with seawater, the company has launched projects from Ayrshire to the Highlands and Bangladesh with a focus on creating ecosystems where food production and conservation work in harmony.

Discussion: “Supporting the future of Scotland’s rural economy”

Fergus Ewing, MSP



Fergus Stewart Ewing is a Scottish politician, serving as the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and the Scottish National Party Member of the Scottish Parliament for Inverness and Nairn.

Colin Smyth, MSP



Colin Smyth MSP is a Scottish Labour Party politician who has been a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for the South Scotland region since the 2016 Scottish Parliament election. He was general secretary of the Scottish Labour Party 2008–2012.

Oliver Mundell, MSP



Oliver has represented his home constituency of Dumfriesshire in the Scottish Parliament since May 2016.

He grew up in Moffat, where he attended Moffat Academy before moving to Edinburgh to study Law at University. After graduating he began working for the global oil and gas company Royal Dutch Shell before taking a firmer interest in politics working within Westminster as a parliamentary aide.

He returned to Dumfriesshire in the run up to the Independence Referendum in 2014 to help co-ordinate the local 'Better Together' campaign.

He is the Scottish Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism and currently a member of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. He is also a member of a number of cross-party groups with a focus on learning difficulties and mental health.

Discussion: “Supporting the future of Scotland’s rural economy”

Liam McArthur MSP



Liam grew up in Orkney and attended Kirkwall Grammar School, before graduating from the University of Edinburgh with a degree in Politics. He was elected as Orkney’s MSP in 2007, following a period as a Special Advisor to the then Deputy First Minister, Jim Wallace. He has also worked as a researcher at Westminster and in the European Commission, before embarking on a career in consultancy. Since being elected, Liam has been a member of various Committees, including Finance, Rural Affairs & Environment, Education & Culture and now Justice. He is currently the Scottish Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Justice and Energy, and leads for the party on the environment in parliament.’

The Rt Hon Alister Jack MP, Secretary of State for Scotland



Alister Jack was appointed Secretary of State for Scotland on 24 July 2019. He was previously Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury and a Government Whip. He was elected Scottish Conservative MP for Dumfries and Galloway in June 2017.

Alister was born in Dumfries and educated at Dalbeattie Primary School, Crawfordton House and Glenalmond College before attending Herriot-Watt University.

Since his election as an MP, Alister has been a member of the Treasury Select Committee, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Leader of the House of Lords, Assistant Government Whip, and Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury.

As a businessman, Alister founded successful tent hire and self-storage companies. He farms, mostly dairy, near Dumfries and grows Christmas trees.

Alister is a member of the Queen's Bodyguard for Scotland, the Royal Company of Archers.

He is a former Deputy Lieutenant for Dumfries and former Chairman of the River Annan and District Salmon Fishery Board, The River Annan Trust, Fisheries Management Scotland and Wildlife Estates Scotland.

Alister lives near Dumfries with his wife Ann. They have three grown up children.

The Secretary of State for Scotland is the UK Government Cabinet Minister representing Scotland. They act as the custodian of the Scottish devolution settlement, represent Scottish interests within the UK Government, and advocate for the UK Government's policies in Scotland.

They also promote partnership between the UK Government and the Scottish Government, as well as relations between the UK and Scottish Parliaments.

Sarah-Jane Laing, Chief Executive, Scottish Land & Estates



Sarah-Jane was appointed as Chief Executive of Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) in December 2019, the first woman to hold this role in the organisation's 110 year history.

Sarah-Jane, who lives on the family farm in Hume in the Scottish Borders, has steadily climbed the ranks at the rural business organisation over the past fifteen years, starting out as housing strategy officer before moving to the role of Head of Policy and most recently Executive Director in 2017.

Leading a team of 25 SLE colleagues based across Scotland, Sarah-Jane's role includes influencing the UK Government on a wide range of issues that will impact rural Scotland. At Holyrood, her focus is on addressing climate change, increasing the supply of quality, affordable rural homes and developing a post-Brexit land-use policy which delivers resilient businesses and thriving rural communities as well as increased environmental resilience and wider societal benefits.

She is also responsible for encouraging Scotland's landowners, whether they are communities, private individuals or charities, to be open, inclusive, enabling and responsible, through SLE's Landowners' Commitment. The Landowners' Commitment sets out how landowners can continue to operate their businesses, while contributing to the public good and all SLE members sign up to it.

Prior to joining SLE she spent over 10 years in housing and planning with local authorities and housing associations.

Sarah-Jane represents SLE on a large number of external stakeholder groups, is a member of the Scottish Government's Women in Agriculture Taskforce, the Climate Change Emergency Response Group as well as a recipient of the Farmers Club Windsor Leadership bursary.