



Scottish Consortium for Rural Research

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Event report, SCRR / RSE Peter Wilson Lecture 2022

‘The time for rural is now’

May 23, 2022

The Royal Society of Edinburgh

The joint SCRR/Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) Peter Wilson Lecture was created in memory of the distinguished agriculturalist and former RSE general secretary, Professor Peter Wilson CBE. This year was the 17th annual lecture.

In 2020 and 2021, the lecture was held online due to the pandemic. In May 2022, we were delighted to hold the event in person at the RSE (with live-streaming available). We built in additional networking time prior to the beginning of the formal proceedings, and the tea and coffee room was buzzing with people reconnecting in 3D!

We were delighted to welcome our speakers:

- Professor Julie Fitzpatrick OBE, Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) for Scotland, Scientific Director of Moredun Research Institute and CEO of The Moredun Foundation. She also holds a Chair in Food Security at the University of Glasgow’s College of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences.
- Claire Taylor, Agricultural Communicator with Jane Craigie Marketing and Herald Columnist.
- Dr Leslie Mabon, Lecturer in Environmental Systems in the School of Engineering and Innovation at the Open University.

The speakers addressed themes of ‘resilience’ and ‘sustainability’, described as essential goals that we must reach. They highlighted how we must address connected crises of climate, biodiversity and livelihoods. They explained how research and practice in rural Scotland are already, and will continue, to support the opportunities and address the challenges that we’re facing, in Scotland, the UK and internationally.

Each speaker communicated with passion about their topic. They emphasised the extensive research base that already exists across Scotland, through the institutes, university and college networks, with a strong message coming through about the physical spread of researchers already embedded in rural Scotland – particularly Early Career Researchers (ECRs).

The role of young people was a common thread, central to the future of rural Scotland – not just talking about young people but bringing them into the heart of dialogue now as solutions are talked through. A third theme was the obvious diversity of rural Scotland – not just geographically, but also in terms of what rural Scotland offers, including high-tech industry, space tech, quantum computing, carbon capture/storage, decommissioning of oil rig technology, as just a few examples.

All three speakers were unanimous that the time for rural is now, in research, practice and policy, with the audience Q&A reinforcing this perspective. It seems that the Peter Wilson Lecture continues to provoke and encourage every year!

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