

Future Landscape Conference 2026 Agenda

"Innovation in Collaboration: Building Resilient Futures Through Collaboration"

Welcome to the 2026 Future Landscapes Conference, hosted by the SRUC's School of Natural and Social Sciences. We are delighted to welcome you to the Barony Campus and hope you enjoy the conference.

Registration

Registration opens at 9.30 in the main reception. Badges, and agendas will be available. Please sign in upon arrival.

Conference Opens 10:00

There will a short introduction by Conference Chair Ely Blyth and School of Natural and Social Sciences Head, Dr Andrew Barnes.

Keynote Speech 10:15

Dr Thomas Logan – University of Leeds and University Centre Bishop Burton

Tea break 10:45

Tea and Coffee will be available in the main hall. Trade Stalls and academic posters are available to peruse at this time.

Morning Presentations 11:15

"Peatland Restoration Showcase"

Barry Dunne – Peatland Action

Outline: Restoration of our degraded peatlands can deliver a wide range of benefits for the communities, economy and environment of Scotland. In this session, we'll look at WHY we need to restore peatlands, HOW we do that, and WHO can get involved. We'll look at how we collaborate across the sector through the provision of advice, support and funding for land managers, agents and contractors. We will also highlight how we are looking to build resilience in the sector through the jobs/skills opportunities we provide for contractors, designers, agents and students.

"Individual, Social and Material Influences on Land Management Decisions in Scotland"

Dr Ian Merrell – Research Fellow at the Rural Policy Centre

Outline: tbc

"Just transformation of food-farming systems: reconciling net zero and other land-use ambitions"

Dr Antonia Eastwood (RSPB), Prof. Julia Martin-Ortega (Leeds University) and Dr Joeline Hughes (RSPB)

JUSTLANZ tests how transdisciplinary, holistic research can realise sustainable transformations and build resilient futures.

Transdisciplinarity, where different disciplines work together with practitioners and communities on the ground to find solutions to real world problems, is meant to be a useful approach for complex systems, where an intervention in one part of the system can have negative consequences in another, if diverse knowledge and perspectives are not integrated into decision making.

The UK government has set a target for reaching Net Zero by 2050 (2045 in Scotland). In JUSTLANZ we explore what this could mean and look like for livestock farmers and the associated food system if this was done in a just way, whilst also balancing the many other demands on our land. Working with different disciplines, including modellers and poets, livestock farmers, food processors, policy makers and conservation groups the project aims to draw

together diverse knowledge and values to co-design innovative just transformation pathways in four UK pastoral landscapes.

Antonia will present some of the findings to date from the Lauder Hills landscape, discussing the challenges, benefits and opportunities that such research presents for building resilient futures.

"Biodiversity in Swards"

Dr Holly Nisbet – Re-Livestock Project

Outline: Multispecies swards (or “herbal lays”) have many benefits, from increasing biodiversity to reducing artificial fertiliser requirements. In recent years, they have been proposed to result in reduced enteric methane from ruminants. Two trials carried out at SRUC’s Dairy Research and Innovation Centre over the summers of 2025 and 2026 compared enteric methane emissions from 36 lactating Holstein cows grazing on plots consisting of either a monoculture of perennial ryegrass or a multispecies sward pasture. The cows were paired according to milk yield and separated into two groups, with one being assigned the perennial ryegrass pasture and the other the multispecies sward pasture. Enteric methane measurements were recorded using GreenFeed units, allowing for comparisons between the two groups emissions to be explored.

“Bird Diversity and Soil Health on a grazing dairy”

Dr Paul Hargreeaves (SRUC), Peter Landale (Landale & Co) and Mhairi Cameron (Chirrup)

Outline: A presentation on the Innovation Voucher projects that have been conducted with Landale & Co on the Dalswinton Estate, Dumfries

Lunch and Poster Circuit 12:15

Lunch is provided in the dining hall.

During this break the academic posters will be judged by Dr Carey Doyle, Dr Thomas Logan & Dr Andrew Barnes.

Trade Stalls

Land Use for Net Zero

NFU Scotland

Lantra	Bright Green Nature
Southern Uplands Partnership	South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre
Buglife Scotland	Nature Scot
Propagate CIC	Scottish Agroecology Partnership
SRUC Innovation Centers	

Afternoon Workshops 13:30

"Valuing the Past in Future Landscapes"

Dr Marie Martin – D&G Council Archaeologist

Outline: This workshop will facilitate discussion of different perspectives on the historic environment in future land use and development projects. We will consider potential professional and policy conflicts, working together to find common ground and develop pathways for collaboration to take us forward.

Dr Marie Martin is a landscape archaeologist with over 20 years' experience in university teaching and research. Her interests include theories of place and landscape, particularly the role of memory in landscape narratives. She is now a county archaeologist for Dumfries and Galloway.

"Understanding Soil Health"

Abi Mordin – Propagate (Scotland) CIC & Dr Paul Hargreaves (SRUC Research)

Outline: A practical 'in field' (outdoor) workshop – digging soil pits and going through a range of practical soil indicator tests that can help people understand the health of their soils.

"Into the Nexus – Digital Dairy Tour"

SRUC's Digital Dairy Nexus

Outline: Interested in the Dairy Nexus building and the research that goes on in there? Join researchers for a tour of the building and the current projects.

"An Agroecological Future– innovative approaches to integrated land use in Scotland"

Scottish Agroecology Partnership

Outline: a panel discussion on the role of agroecology in shaping sustainable landscapes in the future.

"Yes, it is untidy, but it is also healthier: how to ride out the pain of transition"

Nature Friendly Farming Network & National Trust for Scotland

Outline: The session will explore the social and physical barriers to adopting sustainable farming, managing public expectations of what the countryside should look like, and the practical realities of shifting to nature-friendly systems.

They will cover:

- Social Barriers and the Truth About Weeds
- Balancing Heritage, Public Expectations, and Culture
- Practical Insights from the Field

Tea break 14:30

Tea and Coffee will be available in the main hall. Trade Stalls and academic posters are available to peruse at this time.

Future Horizon Sessions

"Community Benefits in Scotland's Restoration Market: What They Are and What They Do"

Andrew Irving, PhD Candidate based in the Centre for Sustainable Forests and Landscapes, University of Edinburgh

Outline: Land-use change toward restoration in Scotland is increasingly shaped by the development of market-based approaches to scaling nature recovery. Within this emerging natural capital market, projects generating and trading nature-based credits

are expected to deliver benefits for local communities. Drawing on stakeholder interviews across policy, finance, landownership, project delivery and community organisations, alongside ongoing survey work with local residents, this presentation examines community benefits in two framings: operationally, what they are, the opportunities they present, and the constraints on delivery; and conceptually, what they do in bridging diverse stakeholder requirements, legitimising markets and shaping future rural landscapes.

" Youth Futures"

Centre for Mountain Studies, University of Highlands and Islands, Scottish Association for Marine Science

Outline: Youth Futures is an intergenerational dialogue between young people and decision makers, involving 58 students from Ullapool, Kinlochbervie and Farr High Schools and decision-makers in the NW2045 network of community bodies, landowners, businesses and agencies. We have gathered answers to those speech bubbles from relevant people with power to make decisions and influence change, and returned these to the young people. Our aim is to raise awareness of young people's concerns and generate hope that they will be listened to.

"The Natural Choice? Perceptions of the terms 'Nature-based' and 'Land-based' and the implication for careers"

Dr Megan Donald – Lantra

Outline: A look into research of young people's perceptions of land-based careers and the implications of these on the sector.

Biodiversity in Scottish plantation forests: what do experts actually agree on?

Lucy Jenner – Centre for Sustainable Forests and Landscapes, University of Edinburgh

This study used a two-round Delphi process to build expert consensus on biodiversity in Scottish plantation forests, before sharing findings with local stakeholders. Results reveal significant divergence between academic,

practitioner, and forestry sector perspectives — with implications for how evidence is used in integrated, collaborative land management decisions.

Conference Discussion

The LUNZ Hub Scotland National Team is led by SRUC and SAC Consulting

The Land Use for Net Zero, Nature and People (LUNZ) Hub is an innovative research initiative that will help drive the transformation of UK land use needed to achieve net zero by 2050. Members of the LUNZ Scotland National Team (Davy McCracken, James Glendinning, and Brady Stevens) will share insights from some of the scenario modelling for Scotland that has been developed by the LUNZ Hub, with space for reflections and discussions with attendees.

Prizegiving and Vote of Thanks

Conference closes at 16:00.