

F5 Conference on Future Food, Fisheries, Farming and Forestry - Jake McLaughlan & Malcolm Haddow

The F5 event was a wonderful and educational experience. We had the privilege of being invited along to attend through our roles as Project Support Officers at the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere. We had the responsibility and opportunity to offer our voices as youth representatives.

The purpose of the event was to offer differing perspectives on the future of food in Scotland and what the main challenges or opportunities may be. There was a fantastic turnout with experts from all fields offering incredible insight. It has never been more important for young people and different organisations to network and collaborate to properly tackle the key issues impacting the rural economy, communities, and businesses.

One of the main points that stuck with us was made by a few different speakers in a variety of ways. They said that we need to stop assigning blame and come together to work towards the solutions. This struck a chord with us as we truly believe that we can spend too much time trying to attribute blame and creating levels of hostility, when we could spend that time and energy overcoming the problem together. This mentality would secure a brighter more collaborative future.

Key takeaways were the importance of properly valuing the stewards of our land and their produce, and the importance of a holistic mindset in increasing our community resilience.

Malcolm was fortunate to be given a voice at the event to contribute to these key issues and give a young person's perspective on land use. Malcolm was keen to highlight the importance of keeping young people in these key discussions, as one day we will be the ones taking on the various industries and projects mentioned at the event. We are very thankful to the organisers for this consideration of youth voices.

The day also offered great networking opportunities with many connections being made. These events are an ideal environment for making these meaningful connections which could result in future collaboration for even further benefit down the line.

We both came away from the event reinvigorated in our own determination to support local business and producers and play our role in addressing the key challenges facing them. As after all it all starts with us.

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Jake McLaughlan & Malcolm Haddow, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere.