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*For immediate use*

**Perthshire farm shop inaugural winner of Scotch Butchers Club Challenge**

Gloagburn Farm Shop, Perthshire, is the international judging panel’s choice for winner of the first-ever Scotch Butchers Club Challenge, announced today by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS).

Judge, Jon Brown from Grogan and Browns, Ireland , said: “The quality of the finalists for a first-time competition like this was impressive and I’m sure I speak on behalf of all the judges involved when I say that the caliber of the counter display entries were extremely high.

“What distinguishes Gloagburn Farm Shop’s entry which was created by Wendy Donald and Colin Brown from the rest is the range of product innovation and uniformity combined with presentation and labelling clearly showed the skill levels required to complete a display of this standard.

The fourteen finalists, based across Scotland, were tasked to create a counter display of Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork. Showcasing their craftmanship, the finalists were assessed on their overall technical skill, product innovation, creativity, presentation of the products on display as well as health and safety.

The displays were judged by an international panel of industry leaders from England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, New Zealand and Holland.

Owner Fergus Niven of Gloagburn Farm Shop, said he was overjoyed to be the inaugural winner of the Scotch Butchers Club Challenge and praised the team of Wendy Donald and Colin Brown:

“It was a team effort and great recognition to the effort that independent butchers put into their craft day in and day out. Like everyone, we’ve had to adapt and change during the past 18 months, but we’ve been proud to continue to serve our community and this continues to highlight the skill of what we, as an industry, can do.

“We’re delighted to be inaugural winners of the Scotch Butchers Club Challenge and the trophy will be proudly displayed in our shop. We look forward to entering again next year to defend our title and I would encourage any Scotch Butchers Club member to get involved.

Gillespies Family Butchers in Lanark and S. Collins based in Glasgow were awarded second and third respectively.

Presenting the Championship Trophy and £500 prize was Gordon Newlands, QMS Brand Development Manager, who said:

 “It’s been a fantastic experience to create a butchery competition which challenges businesses as a whole, and shines a spotlight on their important place in our community.

“New initiatives like this are part of the new Scotch Butchers Club strategy to position butchers as ‘Champions of Scotch’ promoting their skill, craftsmanship and knowledge to consumers.

“Congratulations again to the Wendy and Colin at Gloagburn Farm Shop and to all of our finalists.”

Butchers can apply to join the Scotch Butchers Club for £75per year.

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad and also promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI brands is correct and should not be substituted for an alternative such as Scots or Scottish. The history of the use of the word Scotch in this way, traces back to the 18th century.

QMS also helps the Scottish red meat sector improve its sustainability, efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.

The quality assurance schemes run by QMS cover more than 90% of livestock farmed for red meat in Scotland. They offer consumers in the UK and overseas the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that have spent their whole lives being raised to some of the world’s strictest welfare standards.

Scotland’s beef, lamb and pork producers make an important contribution to the country’s economic, social and environmental sustainability, contributing over £2 billion to the annual GDP of Scotland and supporting around 50,000 jobs (many in fragile rural areas) in the farming, agricultural supply and processing sectors.

For more information visit www.qmscotland.co.uk or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.