News Release



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*For immediate use*

**Butchery apprentices urge peers to carve out a fully-skilled future in the trade**

Two successful young Scottish butchers are fronting a campaign to encourage young people across the nation to join the profession and learn a craft that blends traditional skills with cutting-edge technologies and business know-how.

As part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week (7th – 11th March), Ariane Bennett of D.H.Roberston in Arbroath and Ryan Briggs of Briggsy’s Butchers in Jedburgh are fronting the Quality Meat Scotland and Skills Development Scotland Butchery Careers programme. The scheme highlights over 750 potential vacancies in the butchery sector through apprenticeships that allow participants to develop their skills and earn while they learn.

Their work is part of a drive to remove outdated perceptions and showcase the diverse and accessible range of technical and business skills to be learned through the trade. Today, the average age of a butcher in Scotland is 60, while women represent only 14 per cent of current apprentices in the retail butchery sector.

The Butchery Careers programme is helping to address this imbalance and ensure there is a pipeline of young trainees coming through to future proof the red meat sector, amidst a serious shortfall of skilled positions.

**Ariane Bennett, D.H. Robertson**

*“I grew up watching my dad butchering - from seeing him linking sausages to setting up his cabinet, I thought it all looked so hard and I could never do that! It really fascinated me though, and during the school holidays he would show me skills like dicing up stew and breaking down beef. When I finished school I had no idea what to do, so I took the opportunity to try out butchery for real. I absolutely love it and I’ve not looked back since.*

*“The training I’ve had is fantastic. The assessors are always really helpful and encouraging, and even helped to get me a laptop and software to help with the work as I am dyslexic. You are never truly on your own, and my favourite thing about being an apprentice is being part of a small team. Learning from my peers who all butcher in a different way has really given me so many techniques to work with. I’m actually surprised at how easy it is to manoeuvre the knife and I didn’t think I would be able to use the saw!*

*“As a butcher you are a real part of the community. I can’t get away from chatting to the customers and I especially enjoy seeing the older members of the community in the shop. Sometimes, we might be the only people they speak to that day so I always like to make an effort to strike up a conversation with them. They’re also the first to congratulate anyone in the shop when we’ve won an award!*

*“Winning both the Level 3 apprentice of the year, and previous years’ Level 2 is something I’m really proud of - it’s never been done before in the trade. Next up I am hoping to make a start on my diploma, there’s so much to learn in all aspects of butchering so I’m hoping to just keep developing my skills! I think anyone considering a career in the butcher business should just jump straight in - there’s so much more to it than you think. With a great atmosphere working in the shop and being part of a team, it’s like having a second family.”*

**Ryan Briggs, Briggsy’s Butchers**

*“I always wanted to be a chef when I was in school. My grandfather was a butcher, so I started with a Saturday job helping out in the shop during the holidays, which sparked my interest in taking up an apprenticeship opportunity – and it’s one of the best things I’ve ever done.*

*“My goal was always to have my own shop, and I knew it would take a lot of hard work and training to get there. Throughout my apprenticeship I had incredible support from both my employer and mentor, who picked up on my interest in developing the business side of things on top of building my core butchery skills. This meant I was able to learn about both butchery’s strong traditions and the exciting business potential as a trade for the future. The opportunities kept on coming, and I kept grabbing them with both hands! That’s something every apprentice should consider: knowledge is worth its weight in gold.*

*“My apprenticeship took me to the all-time highs of representing my country on the British butchery team, winning the Scottish Under 22 Butcher of the Year and Apprentice of the Year. I now have my own shop and a team of eight fantastic people working with me. We’re going from strength to strength, and since setting up our new website we’ve already been able to double our online sales.*

*“It’s been a steep learning curve and you never stop developing, but the whole process really helped me to mature as a person. There’s tremendous innovation in the industry, and I love finding and meeting our customers’ demands for new products through our ‘farm to fork’ approach. On my view, butchery at the highest level isn’t just a trade or a job, it’s an art, and something I think will be around forever.”*

Around 25 per cent of current vacancies are apprenticeship opportunities in the retail, processing and catering sector. The programme underlines the crucial business skills that the career provides - from selection of products and product development to learning about the supply chain, recipe development, pricing, profitability and customer service – all while earning a real wage.

The campaign is supported by a careers website - [butcherycareers.co.uk](https://www.butchercareers.co.uk) - where potential candidates can learn about training opportunities, read and watch the real stories of young butchers’ careers and explore job postings.

The programme will also raise awareness of the Government funding opportunities available to support businesses in employing young people.

**Gordon Newlands, Brands Development Manager at Quality Meat Scotland, said:**

*“Ariane and Ryan’s experiences really show the exciting pathways and opportunities that are available to young people in butchery, and that this is a trade that blends practical and business skills in an environment that is full of character and camaraderie. The industry will play a critical role in our social and economic future, and it’s really important that we safeguard the talent pipeline now by recruiting ambitious, entrepreneurial apprentices who are hungry to learn a new craft and progress quickly.”*

**Gerry McBride, Strategic Relations Manager at Skills Development Scotland, said:**

*“A modern apprenticeship in butchery is a chance for young people to be trained by industry experts, gain a nationally-recognised qualification and earn a real wage while they learn. Apprenticeships also offer a unique opportunity for employers, enabling them to recruit from a fresh pipeline of young talent. There are dozens of roles to suit everyone - from processing and catering butchery to the retail butchers we see on high streets across the country – all of which provide opportunities for stimulating successful and long-term careers.”*

For more information on careers in butchery visit [www.butcherycareers.co.uk](http://www.butcherycareers.co.uk)

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors:**

**About QMS**

* QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad.
* 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](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk) or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.

**Skills Development Scotland**

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) are Scotland’s national skills body and contribute to the country’s sustainable economic growth by supporting people and businesses to develop and apply their skills.

SDS work with our partners to provide services that deliver the very best outcomes for Scotland’s people, businesses and the economy.

SDS also delivers Scotland’s career service, with professionally qualified careers advisers supporting people of all ages and across Scotland with careers information, advice and guidance. The advisers provide support in every state secondary school in Scotland as well as in our network of careers centres across the country.