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**PRESS RELEASE**

**14.6.22**

**Local Bioregioning initiative reframes future of food from the ground up**

The first Tayside Bioregioning Learning Journey gave a taste of what rural Tayside could look like if ecology was put at the heart of producing food, the local economy, education and societal wellbeing.

*What will be on our plate in 2042? -* which drew interest from a mix of stakeholders including young people, growers, scientists, the National Farmers Union and Scottish Government - visited four different food producers.

It looked at the challenges and opportunities of growing commercially for retailers and food innovation at Upper Dysart Farm near Montrose to nature-positive farming at Kirklandbank Farm near Alyth, small-scale organics at Myreside near Meigle, and developing a new community garden, Campy Growers, and energy-efficient building at Camperdown Park.

A bioregion is a landscape defined not by political or economic but natural borders, and the aim of the Tayside Bioregioning initiative, co-initiated by Clare Cooper in 2019, is to reframe thinking and grow greater understanding of the impact of land management on every aspect of life. She explains:

“*A healthy ecosystem facilitates our survival, and we need dynamic widespread behaviour change to move towards more regenerative, resilient lifestyles. We currently have a broken economic model which is fuelling the climate crisis, threatening the food webs we depend on and impacting society and mental health.*

*“This learning journey brought together people from across Tayside to see how we can reframe our thinking and reorientate human activity in our locality to mitigate this decline. We want to introduce long-term strategies to address the twin concerns of climate and land-use change, and part of this is giving greater agency to the local community on issues that impact them most. This includes access to affordable, nutritional food, flood mitigation, fulfilling education or attracting regenerative tourism that leaves the area in a better state. By changing the frame, we can change the story.*”

The discussion during the day demonstrated how the local area could thrive and strengthen – economically and socially – by restoring natural landscapes and collaborating across urban and rural, and between sectors, to co-create solutions to climate change and sustainable livelihoods. Working on a bioregional level allows the group to harness indigenous, place-based knowledge from participants and the assets of the natural topography to benefit the cross-section of stakeholders.

Martha Smart, Tayside Climate Hub Co-Ordinator, who attended the day, said:

“*Seeing a broad range of businesses was an opportunity for us all to better understand the context we are working in, and prompt important discussion around systems where the pressures of producing ever more food and farm subsidies have created intensive practices needed for farming businesses to survive. This has come at the cost of our environment and nature and plays a role in food waste and flooding. The day’s discussion was brilliant for framing it differently, looking at relocalisation rather than growth at any cost, and how the regeneration of local ecological systems can build community resilience and actively respond to global heating.”*

Three further key areas that Bioregioning Tayside is working on, subject to funding, are how communities can help monitor landscape changes, a biodiversity and carbon collective and how Regenerative Tourism can grow in Scotland. This is a step beyond sustainable tourism, by which visitors help leave places in a better state than when they arrived through being mindful about the carbon footprint of their travel, their impact on host communities and the natural environment and volunteering on ecological or social projects. The new outdoor Cateran Eco-Museum is already pioneering this approach.

The idea behind a carbon collective is to democratise carbon capture and allow smaller landowners and farmers to sell at scale as carbon trading accelerates. The collective would also contribute a percentage of sales in community benefit payments, similar to community wind farms.

This was the first in a series of learning journeys to explore how some of the big issues can be addressed through reframing and collaboration. The next Bioregioning Tayside learning journeys, open to all interested parties, are:

**Bioregioning Tayside Learning Journeys**

**Change the frame, change the story**

* **Can Tourism Help Tayside #RaceToZero**

**Date: 30th June 2022m online 4-5pm**

* **What Will I Do When The Waters Rise?**

**Date: 2nd July 2022 Alyth 12.00-4.00pm**

* **How can participatory science bring new solutions to ecosystem restoration?**

**Date: 14th July 2022, online 4-5pm**

For more information on Bioregioning Tayside or to register for these events see [www.bioregioningtayside.scot](http://www.bioregioningtayside.scot)

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**The businesses visited on the first learning journey *What Will Be On My Plate in 2042?*:**

At [Upper Dysart Farm](https://www.upperdysart.co.uk/), Andrew Stirling explained large scale potato farming, how he works with retailers and his experimentation with planting wildflowers to offset his use of chemicals and manage disease naturally. With government grant funding, he has recently built on the family potato growing and prepped vegetable business to make mash that challenges food waste. He now employs 70 people, up from seven.

Dr Marian Bruce has spent the last 16 years restoring biodiversity on the hill farm above Alyth she runs with her husband, Simon Montador, through new native tree planting, hedging, grazing Herbridean sheep, wildflowers and a wildlife pond. On the farm, they distil their [Highland Boundary](https://www.highlandboundary.com/) spirits with wild botanicals found growing locally.

“*Although sustainability is now commonly used language across food systems, it needs to be so much more than sustained, it needs to be regenerative,” said Marian. “We need to reduce global consumption and production, eat less but eat better, and to promote a socially just and ecologically sound society, growing prosperity through wellbeing rather than GDP*.”

[Antonia Ineson](https://www.bioregioningtayside.scot/bioregioning-projects/myreside-organics/) grows organic vegetables on a four-acre plot near Meigle, [Myreside Organics](https://www.facebook.com/Myreside-Organics-1317985781581506/). A member of the Organic Growers Alliance and the Scottish Organics Stakeholder Group, she is working to influence at policy level as well as calling for a robust pipeline of advice and training for growing organics in Scotland to encourage it on a wider scale.

Antonia has seen the benefits of a system in Denmark in which schools procure organic food for school meals and, by giving their catering staff training, instilling both a sense of value in food and greater staff retention, proud of what they do. Having completed an intense nine-month course in New Zealand on biodynamic and organic agriculture and horticulture, she would like to see education and training for organic farming more widely available, particularly pertinent at a time that Dundee & Angus College has announced it will be dropping its agriculture module.

[Campy Growers](https://www.bioregioningtayside.scot/bioregioning-projects/campy-growers/) is a group of volunteers led by Kate Treharne of Dundee City Council and Dr Beverley Searle, human geography and wellbeing expert at Dundee University. Keen to promote good food through growing, it was given access to land by Dundee City Council in its biggest park, Camperdown. In the first year, they grew enough vegetables for the group with surplus to donate to community larders. This year, they are looking forward to the build of a community hub with passivhaus standards, which requires very little energy to run, and will be a facility for people to meet, learn to grow and cook.

“*It’s about thinking differently,” said Beverley. “Instead of feeling the pressure to earn more money to buy food, those in the community can join a community garden like Campy Growers, where they get the triple benefits of being outside, spending time and having good conversations with other people and taking home naturally-grown fresh produce, whilst also lowering food miles and contributing to netzero. It’s a win, win.*”

**Editor’s Notes**

* For more information on Bioregioning Tayside see [www.bioregioningtayside.scot](http://www.bioregioningtayside.scot)
* A Bioregion is a geographic area defined not by political or economic boundaries but through its natural features – its geology; topography; climate; soils; hydrology and watersheds; agriculture; biodiversity; flora and fauna and vegetation. Working together in this way enables
* Less excess and waste
* Citizens taking more responsibility for the wellbeing of the place where they live
* New economic models that generate community wealth and local livelihoods
* Greater visibility for all the green shoots of resilience emerging locally
* Other bioregioning projects: <https://www.bioregioningtayside.scot/bioregioning-in-action/bioregioning-across-the-world/>