New Release

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**Butchery apprenticeships transforms lives**

Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2024, running from March 4th to March 8th, is poised to celebrate the invaluable contributions of apprenticeships to individuals, employers, and Scotland's economy.

The annual event serves as a platform to champion the merits of work-based learning across diverse sectors. At the forefront of this year’s celebrations is the remarkable journey of Marc Ingram. The dynamic young butcher from Stirling started on The Butchery Careers programme by Quality Meat Scotland and Skill Development Scotland three years ago and is already vying for Scottish Apprentice of the Year.

“Marc exemplifies the potential unleashed through apprenticeships,” says Sarah Millar, Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) Chief Executive. “Currently a Level 2 Apprentice in Meat & Poultry Skills at Smiddy Butchers, Marc has emerged as a beacon of inspiration, exceeding his own expectations. His journey is a compelling story of resilience, creativity and personal growth. And while he attributes his success to his apprenticeship in butchery alone, having found his passion, he clearly works hard and puts his all into his career.”

Departing school at the age of 15, Marc’s future was uncertain. “I really struggled with dyslexia and could hardly read and write. I was worried that I wouldn’t have stable job. I hated feeling ashamed because of the dyslexia and would do nearly anything to get out of work at school,” he explains.

One of Marc’s first jobs was in a local factory, where serendipity intervened, guiding him towards the world of butchery. It was here that Marc's journey took a transformative turn, as he embarked on an apprenticeship journey at Smiddy Butchers in Blair Drummond, Stirling.

"When I was younger, I thought the only way to be successful was to go to college and get a degree but I knew this wasn’t an option for me. With the help of my Interrupted Learning Services, I discovered the butchery apprenticeship which has been life-changing.

“A lot of folk see butchery as ‘just cutting up meat’ but there are so many ways to do more and different. I love to experiment and explore ideas, finding ways to add value to produce. It’s about taking something simple and developing it into something unique.”

Marc's experience underscores the multifaceted nature of apprenticeships, transcending traditional perceptions and unlocking possibilities. Through hands-on training and mentorship under Fraser Sivewright, his manager at Smiddy Butchers, Marc is honing his craft, exploring innovative techniques and infusing traditional practices with a modern twist.

“I couldn’t have done any of this without the team at Smiddy,” he says. “Everyone has been extremely supportive, particularly my manager Fraser who’s been incredibly encouraging and has believed in me since the very beginning.”

 “We’re delighted that Marc has got so much from the apprenticeship programme,” says QMS’ Gordon Newlands. “He truly deserves being a finalist in the Scottish Apprentice of the Year Award and we wish him the best of luck for the final stage of the competition.”

“Initiatives like the Butchery Careers programme foster a new generation of skilled professionals. By championing apprenticeships, these initiatives bridge skill gaps, empower individuals, and future-proof industries against evolving demands.”

Marc adds: "Butchery has done more for me in the last two years than school ever did. It's not just about cutting meat; it's about creativity, innovation, and adding value to produce. Apprenticeships provide another pathway for individuals to thrive and contribute meaningfully to our communities."

With local butchers supporting around 250 people undertaking Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland, it’s a point that Sarah wholeheartedly agrees with. “Scotland’s high street independent butchers are often one of the country’s unrecognised success stories – and a real force to be reckoned with. Not only do they showcase and promote Scotch red meat, but their focus on customer service, in-depth product knowledge, innovative ideas and developing the next generation is paying dividends.”

For more information about the Butchery Careers programme, visit https://butcherycareers.co.uk/.

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Words count

**Notes to editors:**

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

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb 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.