

Case study

One-to-one mentor for a new entrant to farming

Support provided by FAS: Identifying a suitable mentor and providing funding support



Name & business: **Cara Cameron, Crofter in Lairg Sutherland & Founder of Lochview Rural Training**

Cara became a FAS mentor in 2020 and is the founder of Lochview Rural Training, established in 2021, based on her working croft in Lairg, Sutherland. Her mentees find her to be an inspiring role model, and she believes the FAS mentoring program enables her to make a meaningful impact on the individuals she supports. Equally, she fosters strong friendships and builds a broad networking platform through her role as a mentor.

How did you become a mentor?

I became involved with the FAS mentoring scheme back in 2020 after speaking to a FAS representative. She mentioned, in passing, that I would make a good mentor. Without knowing anything about the FAS mentoring scheme, I went straight to the FAS website to find out more. To my surprise the programme was looking for people with good sound practical experience to help support others on their journey into agriculture.

On reading the information, I started to think how good this would have been when I first started out in the industry 18 years prior.

What sort of tasks have you helped your mentees with?

The role has been varied, from helping one mentee to shear her own flock to supporting individuals in navigating paperwork for BPS and land registration. Even helping mentees

with identification of land use and suitable agricultural systems tailored to their croft and lifestyle.

“I believe I am making a meaningful impact on the individuals I mentor.”

What does mentoring involve?

As a mentor, you are assigned four full-day sessions. In my experience, no two interactions with mentees have been alike. At times, I offer advice over the phone, while other times, I invite them to visit my own croft so I can demonstrate various systems.

As a mentor, I always endeavour to visit my mentees' crofts or agricultural units. This allows me to assess the land's capabilities and understand the daily context in which my mentee operates, enabling me to better address their questions and concerns.



Do you think mentoring is beneficial to new farmers?

Absolutely, I firmly believe that mentoring is highly beneficial for anyone entering farming or crofting, ensuring they begin on the right path and gain an advantageous start. Farming and crofting is hard enough but with a little support it can make life so much easier and helps to develop a network.

Do you feel you got anything out of the experience professionally or personally?

I have been mentoring for four years now, and I believe I am making a meaningful impact on the individuals I mentor. Equally I also get a lot out of the mentoring journey. Not only do I cultivate strong friendships, but it also serves as an excellent networking platform. This becomes particularly useful when you may need to call out to others to help your mentee in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills. I really enjoy seeing my mentees develop their ideas and learn new skills.

What advice would you give to someone interested in applying to become a mentor?

I would actively encourage anyone to consider being a mentor, as it is incredibly rewarding to see your mentee progress. As the four sessions can span a year, the arrangement offers flexibility, allowing you to coordinate with your mentee regarding timing and session duration.

As much as I entered the mentor journey to pass on my help and knowledge to others, I can honestly say I have also learnt so much. I have taken so many fresh ideas back to my croft, so it is very much a mutual learning path and one that will provide you with great satisfaction.

“...it is incredibly rewarding to see your mentee progress.”

View from mentee of Cara Cameron - Steve Maquis

After Cara Cameron became our mentor, a visit from her redirected us onto a completely different path than the one we were previously following.

We decided to focus on cattle, specifically Shetlands, due to their gentle impact, which was essential for rejuvenating our rundown decrofted site over the past decade or so. We are also looking to re-croft, and Cara's guidance has been invaluable. She has helped us navigate through the basics, including paperwork and understanding how livestock operations function.

Cara's wealth of knowledge and expertise is fantastic, and all delivered in a cheerful, upbeat and supportive way. All very encouraging. We certainly would have dug a rather large hole for ourselves without her support which she has continued beyond the FAS funding. We wouldn't hesitate to recommend Cara and take every opportunity to promote her terrific support, care and tolerance of our many very basic questions. Nothing is a bother for Cara, we always look forward to the next opportunity to learn from her.

For further information about the support available, please visit www.fas.scot

**Or contact us
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