ResULTS project: case study D interview 33

Face to face interview with farmer, conducted 18th September 2018

Interviewer: I

Respondent: R

I: Question one, which is; can you tell me a bit about your involvement in the upland beef and sheep sector, the nature of your farm business, any source of diversification, source of income and what is your position in the farm? I mean, you are the owner or the manager, I don’t know.

R: I’m the owner of a farm. It’s, I pretty much run it on my own and we keep 105/110 beef cows for breeding, selling the young stock anywhere between a year and two years old. Just at different stages, depending on them. We also keep some sheep, about 100 to 120 breeding sheep, so we would produce 160 to 180 lambs a year. As well as that, we have diversified a little into holiday accommodation, we’ve two self-catering holiday houses which we tried; partly the thinking behind it was, we’re right on a loch, with quite a bit of fishing, so we could perhaps get fishermen. And we’ve extended the season a bit, by making the house suitable for shooters to come. We had quite a problem with geese, so we get some shooters in the quiet winter months which helps…

I: Monitor also the geese, yeah.

R: …extend the season and to keep the geese under control a bit.

I: That’s brilliant. So, in order to…what resilience means for you? I mean, how you define resilience?

R: Resilience is the ability for the business to keep going through change and difficulties, which…

I: Okay. That’s brilliant. So, going through the literature, I came across this kind of definition; this one when you can see that resilience is the capacity of business or a system as a whole, to either absorb/buffer against internal/external disturbances or then, adapt through incremental changes or even transform through radical changes, so shocks and long-term pressures no longer affect them. Is this definition make sense, I mean do you find it…?

R: Yeah. I would say so, yeah. Yeah.

I: When I mean radical changes, for example, if you decided well, it’s a kind of extreme example, but if there were available team or animals for example, that is kind of radical change, it changes the whole system a lot. If you decided to give up being a cattle farming and you would like to go, beef cattle, and you would like to go to dairy, this is kind of a big radical change. Thanks for that. So, because of the programme, the project is one of the ten different projects that there is related to the resilience of food systems in the UK. This is the only one that is related to the upland dairies, primarily Scotland, three cases, one Orkney, one in Skye and one in Scottish Borders and one from Yorkshire Dales from England. But, what I mean by food system, I have created this kind of figure, yes, if you want, which means pretty much, the blue thing is the supply and chain input suppliers, upland/lowland farmer and then primary processor, secondary processor, wholesaler, retailer, consumer and then the orange circles are all the businesses which is around that supporting from banks, consultants, like vets or like accountants or whatever, extension services for example here, SAC or colleges, Orkney College, research.

I think, is there a research centre related to [area D] agriculture, different mentoring agencies like HIE or it can be either [area D] Council there, for example and then there is the green which is pretty much the stakeholders affected by the; because that arrow, the yellow arrow is, pretty much, the value change, so it is supply change, their supportive organisation create the value chain, so it’s the supply chain plus all the support organisation that create the value chain and then the green things are what the effect, pretty much. But there you can see things like government, which is pretty much there, a lot of interactions, government also affects you. It’s not only affected by the choices you are making. From a pharmaceutical market, I mean vaccines, antibiotics or whatever, energy market, either conventional or renewable, what is that, environmental, social interest NGOs, local upland community which is the local community, plus the tourists and then general public. But this is our kind of the human agents of the; and then there is one more, which is the biological organisations, so, it is the animals the microbic organisms or the plants or whatever.

So, this is pretty much the agents or the actors if you would like to say, in the system and they would try to see all the interactions within those and in what environment, they operate. Does it make sense to you, there is something that; it doesn’t make sense?

R No, that all makes sense, yeah. There’s huge number of people who rely on agriculture, there’s not so many, I mean, the number of farmers is reducing all the time in [area D] and the rest of Scotland and England but the number of people that are still relying on it and in a place like [area D], if you took the agriculture out, the whole…

I: The whole system yeah.

R: …infrastructure because there was the financial collapse a number of years ago but at that time, the farmers actually did reasonably well and the [area D] economy never suffered, I believe, house prices, maybe, dropped slightly but the council spent money to build houses, affordable houses and it kept the builders going and the farmers were making money so they were spending money and it just kept going round and the economy here wasn’t hit like it was other places.

I: Okay. So, from here, you can read those.

R: I should have brought my glasses with me.

I: Oh. In that case.

R: I can see if it’s far enough away.

I: Okay, so place them where it’s better. So, where’s my questions? So, there they’re there. So, if there are function roles or goals, whatever you want to call them. But if those functions were performed satisfactorily, then they create positive outcomes, if these functions are not performed at this actually, then they create negative outcomes. So, from that one, what sort of functions do you think it is important to maintain for your business, you personally, the wider society and features in any instances, we go through all of them, if you identified some, first of all tell me if there is missing anything, something that you cannot see?

R: Well, you've got profit at the top, so that’s the most important.

I: But, just before, you know and then you try to prioritise them. So, you tell me the five most important for your business. It can be any of those, in any type of combination? So…?

R: Without profit, it’s, your profit is the key thing. We’re all in it to make money. Some losses are going to happen but on the whole, we try to make money and that has to be near the top of the list.

I: So, pretty much is the kind of pre-condition for everything else?

R: I would say that, yeah. Not everybody might agree with that. I’ve got two daughters, so succession’s not really a huge thing, I’ll probably just have to slow down at some time and sell up. Because no-one’s going to follow me.

I: Have they married?

R: One of them is, yeah. The other one’s at university in Edinburgh.

I: So, you never know, she might come back and become…

R: You never know, it’s doubtful.

I: …I mean, if she’s at university…

R: Personal family, I mean, personal satisfaction with it or something. It just, it’s a satisfying lifestyle, farming.

I: By the way, that’s my identity.

R: Okay.

I: Okay. Because you said, university and I never…please continue.

R: Yeah. Personal satisfaction would come into it. You’ve got reasonable workload there. I don’t know if any farmers have a reasonable workload but…

I: So, most of them, over…

R: We’re probably all doing too much because we’re trying to make a profit and you have to do more. You can’t afford to pay much help.

I: …So, there is already, a kind of trade-off there?

R: We, yeah, we tend not to have, farming’s our hobby as well as our job. I’ve often said it’s a lifestyle and you don’t really have hobbies. Probably takes up too much of your time, but, I didn’t value something we would all like to do I think, but it’s not so easy to do, when you’re producing beef unless you’ve got someone who can market it in a special way, but, I didn’t value the product as something that, in the future…

I: You mean ninth, the ninth?

R: Yeah. Number nine, I think that’s going to become more and more important because, as we’re looking at Brexit, I don’t there are many positives at the moment. We’re a little unsure of how trade-deals will settle up, our beef is the dearest in the world and we could be undercut by many other countries but if the trade-deals…

I: We’re going to discuss a lot about that.

R: So, I didn’t value, I think, is an important one but it’s been tried by a lot of people but there’s not many people managing to do it on a wider scale to their wider agricultural community. It’s a sort of niche thing but if you’ve got someone who’s good at marketing and selling small packages direct to the customer and then [area D], I mean there’s farmer market is set up here but it’s not so many eaten, it’s not a big enough population. Most of our produce is exported and finished off somewhere else. So, I didn’t value…

I: Do you go to the farmer’s markets? No? Okay.

R: No. The contribution to the social cohesion of the community, I mean, that is, agriculture is key to that, here.

I: Which number is that?

R: Contribution to social cohesion of community.

I: Nine?

R: Number six.

I: Ah, number six, sorry, I see that opposite…

R: You’re seeing upside down. I think it’s you who needs the glasses. How many is that I’ve got then now?

I: Don’t worry, read them through and say, yes that is okay and then you make my…

R: Sufficient local employment opportunities, I said, I forgot one because there are so few farms in [area D] that are really big enough to employ staff, but quite a lot of the time, we could do with someone I could call upon for extra help and it’s getting increasingly hard to find. Used to be that the neighbours would work together a lot and they still do, to an extent, but the neighbours all tend to be busy now on their own and they don’t have time to go and help the other one and it’s getting harder to find help for the few days that you might need it, in the busy seasons. And, because they can go and make considerably more money, other places.

I: Like?

R: Oh, there’s quite a lot of people in [area D] would work offshore now and boats, maybe a month away and a month home.

I: Oh, okay. I didn’t know that. So, they’re leaving in the boat?

R: They would go and work on a, like a cargo ship somewhere or an oil supply vessel or they’re maybe on the oil rigs…

I: Oh, I didn’t know that.

R: …and they would, there’s quite a number in [area D] that would be like three weeks on and three weeks home, a month away and a month home.

I: And they are farmers as well?

R: No.

I: No. Okay so.

R: And that’s what I’m saying, you’ve got that in the community but they’re making so much money, they don’t want to be; some of them would be from farms and some of them have come back to the farm when the farmer’s retired, to take the farm on. Made a lot of money in the interim but, it’s difficult to employ people because of the, sort of, lower profitability of farming, you can’t pay wages to compete with, or even now, probably, you know, like the little bit of inshore fishing in [area D], there’s not much deep-water fishing but there’s quite a bit of crab-fishing, shell fish and the wages there would be way above what you would get for, and I would assume the same on the salmon farm that are around.

I: Okay. So, they prefer to go for full…

R: Well, money does take people away and as I say, it’s, there’s so few farms that can actually, it’s mainly family farms we have, and they can’t really justify a full-time worker and nobody wants part-time work.

I: So, what about the other categories? Like, 11, all them, the rest?

R: Flood prevention. Flooding’s not really a huge problem in [area D].

I: Okay. So, it’s not relevant?

R: Because we’re so small that the only places you really get flooding tends to be if the boundary’s in the wrong place perhaps but mainly just around the coast, when you get a really high tide, coinciding with a low-pressure system. This last few years, there has been a change, due to the climate. We’ve had, 2012 was a very wet year. 2015 was really, really wet. 2016 wasn’t too good, last year was better for a while and then, first of August it never stopped raining and there are farmers that have changed their stocking rates to suit them because of the wet weather.

I: Okay. Don’t worry, we’re going to discuss that later on.

R: We’re quite dry at home by diversity enhancement. It’s mainly down to money. It’s mainly down to money, the biodiversity enhancement through…

I: You mean through government environmental schemes? Okay.

R: …environmental schemes and I think more than half the farms on [area D] are on environmental schemes now. We’re on one as well. And there’s not much upland moorland on [area D] so I don’t know if the carbon sequestration is that important here.

I: That’s through the peat distribution?

R: Yeah. There’s not a huge amount. There is some peat-land but it’s not a huge amount like in the islands of Scotland. Clean water. The environmental schemes is helping that. The farming system is probably better now than it was 30 years ago for that, because of the better buildings and storage of everything. Water and air, I don’t know that the air’s very bad up here, so. Maintenance of it shouldn’t… Generic diversity what exactly does that mean?

**I:** The means, pretty much, if, either you try to keep breeds, they have a kind of history or you try to improve the breeds like, as a breeder.

R: Oh yeah, I was reading that wrong. Yeah. Yeah well, I’m sort of, they shouldn’t, X is changing the whole time and because the genetics being in the cattle in [area D] have been quite good, we’ve got quite a good market for our cattle. I…were you down at the market yesterday?

I: Unfortunately, no. I would love to but I’ve had so many interviews.

R: I would assume there was probably like, 15 to 20 different buyers up from Aberdeenshire, East coast of Scotland to buy cattle and they were breeds on a large scale finishers, they might only keep them for three or four months, but they would [travel] up to [area D] just for the day to buy them and they would, some of them would buy the majority of their cattle here, just because they know they’re getting a fairly well-bred, so that’s important.

I: So, do you use any EBVs?

R: I…

I: EBVs.

R: EBV, yeah, I would always look at that when I’m buying a bull, yeah. We would normally buy bulls in Stirling. We will probably be down there next month and we would always look at the EBVs as well as the animal. I’m not saying every farmer does, but…

I: I’m asking, because I know that then, in most of the farming [inaudible]…

R: I would always look at it.

I: What else is there?

R: I’m looking at the next one, preventing…

I: Number?

R: Eighteen.

I: Number 18.

R: Number 18. Preventing of depletion of reserves through effective recycling e.g. minerals. We’re being forced into recycling more.

I: Excuse me. What is it? This is a bit… Eighteen, preventing of depletion of reserves through effective recycling.

R: Assume that’s just recycling anything that we would use?

I: Is anything you use, but also some, it’s. pretty much. To keep a kind of, it’s not exactly biodiversity but being in balance of the plant and everything in your land, so, pretty much, keeps the minerals, keeps the, so it avoided degradation of the habitat, pretty much.

R: Yeah. I think that that is important in, again, the environmental schemes, are helping maintain some of that habitats. The, I don’t think that in [area D] we’ve ever really destroyed much. There were large areas improved in the 60s and 70s. There’s still quite a bit in that land around in the higher hills here.

I: So, what do you mean? And what happened in the 60s and 70s?

R: In the 60s and 70s, there was a lot of drainage went on and drained wet-land, and farmers got money to try and improve land by drainage and lime and phosphate. There was grants for all that, before my time, but, in a push to produce more food for the country. That all stopped and a lot of that land that was improved, now going back. It doesn’t really go back to what it was before, but it’s, a lot of that bit of land would be, or some of it would be in environmental schemes and getting nothing technically.

I: Okay. So what else is there?

R: Access and recreational value for the public. That has its problems. We had a lot of sheep condemned one year because they picked up worm left by dogs.

I: So, you mean, tourists or new-comers with dogs or going around in the fields, pretty much.

R: I assume it was some of the folk we had in our holiday houses. And they’d take the dogs out in the field where we’d just cut silage, and let the dogs make their mess and never picked it up and then later on that year, we put lambs off for slaughter and they found these cysts in them, so they were unfit for human consumption. So we lost the value of those.

I: So, this pretty much, is the kind of, serious side, side effect of recreational?

R: And there’s been various…

I: I like the fact that you stopped mentioning some trade-offs, recreation, okay, it’s good but at the end of the day…

R: There’s rights to roam, so you can’t stop anyone going in your field. But there are regulations that they should be picking up what the dog leaves behind because there is also, Neosporosis that cattle get and they abort calf. There have been various cases, and there have been some in [area D] as well, dogs amongst sheep and even dogs they’re getting it through the cattle, they can just, the temperament of the cattle changes after it and you’ve got problems handling them. They are quite unsafe to work with. So, there are, and sadly, if anything happens, if somebody does go in the field where your cows or a bull and cows are probably actually worse because you expect the bull to go for you and you’d watch him, but in the spring-time if you get between a cow and a calf, it can be quite, very dangerous. But a lot of the public don’t understand that and it’s you that’s liable. It’s not them, it’s not them for being stupid to go there, it’s you that’s liable because you didn’t have…

I: So, I assume on your farm, you have to put all the signs, don’t go close to my farms, to my animals, I mean?

R: The less. There are various trade-offs, and it’s totally different if you’re in the [area A] and there’s a few sheep on the hill, they’ve got plenty of space to run away from somebody, but in [area D], it’s quite intensive, the fields are not that huge and if you get somebody in it with two dogs and the cows will just all, they’re usually inquisitive but then if you get in the wrong place or a dog gets in the wrong place, and the protective nature of the mother comes out, it can be quite dangerous, so, I don’t think we want to stop. I mean, we’ve always allowed fishermen down through the fields for fishing in the loch and we’ll have like straight tourists now but we did have that problem that we lost two and a half thousand pounds worth of lambs, through the winter.

I: So what about 20?

R: Yeah, well, once again, I mean, I don’t think there’s really the natural landscape, I don’t think it’s been harmed in any way by what we’re doing in [area D] any more. The farmers, they’re not doing anything that’s…

I: On anything, I want the other hand, the landscape, it’s like that because they are farmers.

R: The landscape’s like that because it’s been farmed on the same farm, for hundreds of years and people come to [area D] because it’s nice and clean and…

I: Pretty much, it’s quite important function.

R: …if farmers weren’t there, it would look like that and I think actually, the RSPB, don’t agree with me on this, but I don’t agree with much about the RSPB says.

I: Don’t worry, there is no right or wrong answers, because…

R: The RSPB would try to say that you need all these natural areas untouched and un-farmed and all this, and that’s where the birds live. We’re on environmental schemes now and been for ten years but we’ve been farming for 25 years and continually in that 25 years, we have actually seen an increase in the number of lapwings, an increase in the number of oyster catchers. I know that [inaudible] with birds to share their [inaudible] but we also have numerous curlews, not so many of them but when we started, it was quite rare to see lapwings and now, we could easily see 50 in a field. And the RSPB would say that most of the land I have would be good for bats but they’re living there, they’re nesting there, they’re rearing their young. And if you’re quick, you need to be observant in the spring-time sometimes when you’re working with machinery, to move the nests or avoid the nests or something but, the, I think that the farmer gets blame for destroying a lot of that things but they’re not guilty of…

I: But in reality, yeah? But there is, for sheep there is, from national sheep association, there is a really good report which says the complimentary role of sheep, and pretty much explains what you just said, that we need some certain stocking range of sheep per year otherwise, that there is degradation.

R: And even on the hills where there are only sheep, they do say now, the SNH would say that there’s huge benefit from having cattle but…

I: So, in your farm, for example, you have seen, because you have sheep and cows, what do you see for the habitat benefits, what do you see the effect of having cows on what is the effect?

R: Partly the reason we got sheep, we’d no cattle, for a start, and part of the reason for getting sheep was to reduce the number of weeds because the sheep will eat some of the weeds that the cattle wouldn’t eat. And that keeps that down without having to use chemicals.

I: But you’re not in any organic scheme?

R: No.

I: No. Okay

R: No, I’m not organic but it’s just, it’s tricky to use chemical sprays on some of the grazing because the weed, when it dies, it becomes more palatable and the one particularly is ragwort, which is poisonous. So, if you put sheep on at the right time of year, the sheep eat that ragwort.

I: So, it’s not any more bio…? Yeah. You mean, bracken?

R: No, ragwort. The yellow flower on it. It’s very poisonous to horses but it’s also, sheep are quite immune to it but cattle, if you make it, if you’ve got it in your grass when you make silage, it would affect the cattle in the winter-time.

I: In what ways?

R: They get like a, diarrhoea, I think, and it affects the liver and in an extreme case, they can die.

I: Okay. So, the one way of dealing with that, is getting the sheep on the field, on the right time?

R: Get the sheep in the early spring and they will eat that plants down.

I: Okay. I didn’t know that.

R: I would say there’s a slight problem with environmental schemes.

I: What is the problem?

R: Because they think it’s bad to spray and they’ve got these rules that you can only go within one and a half metres of a hedge, one and a half metres of a dyke, one and a half metres of a ditch and you can’t spray, you can’t cultivate, you can’t do anything. All these weeds grow and then you’ve got the cattle in the field and they eat the weeds at the side and then they go across the field and deposit the seeds in their dung all across the field.

I: So, pretty much, they…

R: Previously, farmers were going around nearer to the field when they cult-…and then when there was more labour in farms they might have gone round and cut the weeds at the side, just to stop the weeds spreading but we’ve got all these massive weeds building up, and…

I: You’re the first person that mentions that. So, any kind of example like yours, that they’re the ones, it’s really good because they give a little bit, I mean, the practicalities which makes the difference, but some people, they don’t mention those but this is the kind of information I need to collect…

R: And another one is…

I: …to understand what are the trade-offs between either using the environmental schemes versus farming or whatever and when the one works as a constraint for them.

R: An example of a real problem. They run a second environmental scheme now there was a year or two we weren’t on the scheme, in the middle, but the first one, when we put barley in the field, we left the strip around the side, six metres uncultivated, there’s a grass margin to help bumble bee and whatever else, then the last year we had barley in the field, we ploughed the whole lot but when that field came back to grass, that six metre strip around the outside is just full of docks and docks is a weed we’re having a real problem with and then the seeds come in with the silage and once again, because we’re on an environmental scheme, we cut the silage later, the docks are stronger, you can’t spray them in the spring because you’re on the scheme and then the seeds go through the cattle and then they go back out again in the slurry and they grow again…

I: Pretty much, destroy the whole barrels.

R: We’re fighting a losing battle and I think that, I know what the environmental scheme’s trying to do but I think there’s a problem in the future that there aren’t, there’s going to have to be more chemicals used to clean those fields of weeds again. But that’s…

I: They ended up causing more problem than?

R: Well, there’s benefits and there’s disadvantages and that’s the disadvantage that I have found. We got the money on the scheme but at the end, you wished you hadn’t had this grass margin but I probably had to do it to get points to get on the scheme, and it maybe was a benefit to wildlife. I’ve never seen any research then that proves that either way, but the thought is that it would benefit the environment in that way, but on the other hand, it’s causing me to have to spray more, and sadly, the sprays you use to kill the docks, kill the clover, so you’re less environmentally friendly because you can’t fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, so you’ve to put on more chemical fertiliser to get the field to produce for a year or two to get the clover re-established. So, there’s…we’re digressing a bit perhaps.

I: What?

R: Perhaps, we’re digressing a bit there.

I: Okay. One very quick question, so you want to do this for farmers for the rest for them, either the meat producers or the breed dealers, what do you think are the five most important functions of the roles of those?

R: For the processor, I didn’t value his to be high in their agenda, because if they don’t get enough value added, they can’t make money and that would like back to profitability again, any business is in it for profit. So, I would say, for processors, profit and adding value, they would like to see to be green, environmentally friendly in some way…

I: But? There is a but, I see that is coming.

R: How they do it, is sometimes quite devious.

I: Like, for example? What do you mean?

R: Well the one thing is, if you take the distilleries in the north-east of Scotland, there used to be a huge source of food for cattle; to get environmental friendly points, they now take the draw, the wet grains that comes out, they dry it and the one distillery, it’s not that big a distillery have been, I believe, burns teens of tons of logs every day to dry this draw, so that then they can put this draw and burn it, to get environmental points. So, they consider an environmentally friendly whisky but the farmers used to rely on that for food-stock for protein in the diet, now have to go and import soya bean meal from Brazil it’s carted half way across the world and is grown where there used to be rain forests. So…

I: It doesn’t really make sense.

R: …it makes no sense.

I: Yeah. So, to some extent, it seems that, applying those kinds of environmental schemes, either in different stages in the supply and chain or in different sectors, which are linked…

R: There’s always negatives.

I: It pretty much destroyed a bit of the balance that used to exist, as you said, before we were getting that kind of, input now, we don’t get it. I think we need to, pretty much…

R: There were a lot of farms that didn’t reserve an awful lot of good land, but they had land they could graze cows in in the summer, and they could graze the cows through summer but they couldn’t produce winter food. It’s not a problem in Orkney so much, but they would rely on straw from the arable farms, 20 miles down the road, but quite a lot of that now, is growing into energy, one way or another. So, straw is less plentiful, more expensive, and they’ve lost good, we feed that along with the distillery by-products but those two things have both sort of gone, to get green energy and there is a, quite a trade-off there, I would say.

I: Okay. So, let’s just see…

R: So, I think that is important for the food processors to try and do everything and clean water in the earth, they’re all looking at that, to reduce…

I: Waste, you mean?

R: Yeah, and be… I know they’re supposedly building a new abattoir in Inverurie at some point and it’s all been designed to use as little water as possible, to be, and to recycle water, I think. Things like that.

I: But on the reverse, they consume a lot of water. So, it’s, those invest in the consumable. So, if you saw out there, all the kind of disturbances, so long-time pressure, or drive of change or social, whatever you would like to call them, but most of them, when you read them, you will see them as a threat. I would like first, to ask you, if there is anything missing and one other question, if any of those can be seen also, as an opportunity? Just to bring it closer because you speak, quiet, a bit. I’m not sure how sensitive this is, I hope it is. Good.

R: Well, the increase in temperature could be a positive for us.

I: So, first one, an increase in temperature. It’s not, it’s just an example, but because any kind of slow, gradual change, it would be wetter or it can be, hotter, it can be, any gradual, not very sudden, because later on, you will see something…

R: Increase in winter temperature’s not always good because the cattle have to be housed and you get, the warmer it is, the bigger a problem you have with them inside. But if you’ve a slight increase in the temperature in the summer, you could produce more off your farm.

I: So, what do you mean by that?

R: You know, the grass grows faster if it’s warmer.

I: Ah, okay.

R: As long as you’ve got available water, like this year, we had no water for June, July and most of August and the grass growth has been terrible.

I: But, if it, if there is an increase in temperature, why is there a need to put the cows inside? Because I thought you put it…

R: Because you get their feet wet in the winter.

I: Ah, okay. So, you don’t want to, yeah.

R: We don’t need to take them in because it’s cold, we take them in because it’s wet. And the environmental impact on the land would be huge in [area D], if we left all the cows outside because we are so heavily stocked. It’s not like the Highlands of Scotland when you’ve got two Highland cows in a square mile.

I: So, what kind of environmental impact if it’s wet weather and you put the cows outside, what kind of impact, do you have?

R: And the fields become black, you would get earth just running off the field.

I: Because of the heavy…

R: Rain, and you would have to feed them anyway, because the grass wouldn’t grow enough to feed them, so, you would be going out with heavy machinery trying to feed them outside and you’d be making tracks down the field and then, the last winter’s we’ve had anyway, they would be turning in the field and it just would be washing straight in the water streams but they’re inside and all that’s collected and spread when the conditions are right.

I: So, it’s not clearly, it’s kind of a mixed effect of that driver?

R: Yeah.

I: So, next is, what is…

R: Change in disease/pests…

I: It’s related to all with increase of temperature or humidity.

R: Yeah, well, I mean, we’ve…

I: You might see some pests or diseases but if you haven’t seen…

R: Yeah, liver fluke one is increasing all the time and been this last years because of the damp. Used to be that liver fluke only appeared at a certain time of year but it’s been so wet and mild that it can be in any time of the year and it’s getting to be a bigger and bigger problem. Not only here, right throughout Scotland. Energy/water availability. Like this summer, we had the driest it’s been for many, many years. Generally, what happens is a problem…

I: Although this one it comes later on because it’s extreme weather events, so you would see that later on. That’s more the general kind of water energy availability in the area. But I don’t think so, in general, [area D] has any issue.

R: No. Energy, there’s any amount generally.

I: Okay. So for [area D] it’s not relevant?

R: And I don’t think there’s a lot of the habitat degradation in [area D] really, they’re quite well balanced.

I: Okay. And the fifth?

R: Pollution of air and water, it’s, I’m pretty sure it’s quite well.

I: Okay. So, not relevant for [area D]? Okay.

R: No. I mean it could always improve but, the regulations and everything, so much stricter now that…

I: Then, biophysical drivers, but this time is sudden, completely unexpected. So, it can be extreme event or outbreaks of diseases. How do [area D] people deal with any outbreaks of diseases in the past? [area D] farmers, I mean.

R: The…we had the Foot and Mouth 2001 which, I think, I’m trying to think how long the live markets were shut down for the auction markets, they were probably shut for six months.

I: But that did it turn out to be an advantage at the end for [area D], because, I think [area D] was the first one, so pretty much, anyone was desperate to get to [area D].

R: It was two or three weeks when we couldn’t send cattle for slaughter and then you got inspections before you left the pier, you had to wash and disinfect your tractor and trailer. The council officials were stood checking it was done right. I can’t really think of any other major outbreak, disease outbreak there’s been here. That would have been, I mean, it wasn’t here but it could quite easily have been in [area D] because it was right after the bull sales and a number of bulls had come in, so it wasn’t impossible that it couldn’t get here although we’ve got the water.

I: But finally didn’t reach [area D]?

R: It never reached it, no. There’s not that many stock come into [area D] other than breeding stock. So, we are quite in, quite a number of farmers would isolate them when they came home so it should help, but it certainly could have a huge impact on the local economy if there was a big major disease outbreak. And extreme weather, it’s not unusual to get extreme weather here.

I: But also, wet weather…

R: Flooding doesn’t really affect, I mean, we had a huge amount of rain 2015 but it was surprising how the farmers got through. We’ve had it extremely dry this year but it’s surprising how…

I: How could the farmers cope with both these events? I mean, what do you, the response is?

R: I’m fortunate, I’ve got a farm that can kind of, survive reasonably well, probably wet would actually suit it better than dry this year, the grass growth has been poor in late summer and it’s looking like, we’ll have to take livestock in earlier to house them and feed them. It’s always a concern.

I: So, you mean, earlier inside?

R: Yeah. Instead of coming in first of November, they’ll probably have to come in, in the middle of October.

I: Okay. And then, you sell them earlier or you keep it…

R: No. The problem is that they’re breeding stock, you have to keep and hopefully they should have enough to get us through but that’s always a loaded question when spring comes.

I: So, if I understand correctly, your farm is more like breeding orientated?

R: What’s that sorry?

I: Your farm is more only aimed towards breeding rather than store.

R: Yeah. We’ve got, hopefully we’ve got, I think, 108 or 10 cows calved last year and we ended up with 104 or 5 calves, so those cows and calves will all come in. Most of the calves are born in March/April, so, they’ll be taken off their mothers when they come in, sort of, November, end of October, November and then we might sell some of them next spring when they’re a year old. Other ones we’ll will graze again. But we’ve got, you've got your breeding herd that you have to maintain and to sell them too young, you don’t get any income and you upset the calf, so for years to come if you want to get back into your system you were in before; we have changed partly because of the subsidy system.

I: Okay. What kind of effect does it has, the subsidies?

R: Away back when we started farming, we used to take everything nearly through to slaughter because you got a payment when you slaughtered an animal and if you kept a male calf, to a certain, you got two payments on it, one at 10 months and another one at 20 months, certainly two months. So, we really were looking at maximising payments out of subsidy and whatever the subsidy scheme is at the time, the farmer will adapt the system to, but now because we don’t get paid on that, it’s more sensible to sell them younger and let the finishers in Aberdeenshire, who seem to have cheaper feed than we do. Freight’s a killer. ‘Cause everything comes in, costs 40 or 50 pounds a ton.

I: And when they, pretty much, changed, in which year they moved from?

R; It was a gradual change, probably from, the subsidy changed 2005. 2010, the local abattoir, sort of, closed to big scale business. There was an abattoir that used to [area D] meat and they would process 5,000 cattle a year…

I: Were you part of that?

R: I put cattle there and sheep.

I: And you were part of the co-operative?

R: It wasn’t a co-operative, as such, no…

I: It wasn’t a co-operative, it was a kind of private, but behind the scenes, it was the farmers, would have…

R: It was farmers that started it off, but it was a meat company, meat processing and they did well in the late 90s, after BSE, they had quite a good story to tell. Island-produced beef grass-fed and they had a salesman in the south of England and they had niche markets value-added it, if you like, but then Food Mile started to come in and they got competition from Cornwall and Dorset, places that could put into, a far shorter distance than we had. But then we were probably unfortunate, we got a manager that wasn’t quite so good and the waste disposal was a huge burden.

I: In the terms of the cost?

R: Yeah. Getting all the…

I: I think other at that point, I think, or, still there is a subsidy for moving live animals, but you don’t have the subsidy for waste…

R: You didn’t have it for carcases, either.

I: Yeah, for carcases. So pretty much, that distorts also, you know, the…

R: Yeah, but that went so, when it disappeared, that would have put some farmers off finishing cattle as well. And I think, I don’t know why, but the Aberdeenshire farmers seem, they can do it a lot cheaper than they used to, or something, and they’re willing to pay a good price in the store markets, that’s how our business has changed to go to that. We still would slaughter some but probably a quarter of our cattle would go straight to slaughter.

I: Now, you mean about the second releasing led by butchers, abattoir, later on? The first thing you said to me, the [area D] meat, I think, and finished up 2012.

R: Two thousand and ten, 2011, maybe, was it ‘12 you think it finished?

I: I don’t remember. Somewhere there…

R: Somewhere then, yeah.

I: And then, there was a gap and then, they started the other initiative from the butchers, the [area D] meat abattoir or how it’s called?

R: Yeah, the butchers. They’ve done. There was a very short time that wasn’t there. It was kept open for them but they’ve never marketed beef really, off the island. It’s just for the island. It’s just the local butchers that run it. So, there’s only, like, 15 cattle a week, not even that, maybe, now.

I: So, about those two initiatives, because having an abattoir in [area D], it seems that it’s quite crucial, you know, to make, to add value and pretty much, get payment for that, adding value, but what has been wrong in those attempts? Why have they failed?

R: It was a combination of things. They ended up, a main thing was, the cost of getting rid of the waste and, I think, the cost of running the plant, because throughput was limited and they always had a problem getting cattle during the summer and they had to pay quite a big premium to encourage farmers to supply them. So, June/July. So, they probably lost quite a bit of money.

I: So, it didn’t catch up how that time of the getting the premium affected how it worked?

R: They paid so much extra, because they always had a problem getting cattle from the, sort of, middle of May through to the middle of August. I’m not sure if that’s the right dates, but June/July was certainly two months and a bit longer, I think, they paid, they had a premium anyway, if it met the specification they wanted from their buyers. They doubled it, from memory, for that period when they struggled to get beef. So, that would have been one problem; another problem was that they had a butcher’s shop in the south of England and the delivery charge was far too big to go with half a calf was, you know. And latterly, they were trying to set up a deal with Tesco’s but no-one’s really made much money out of dealing with supermarkets. Not small-scale producers, anyway. And, seems a huge, lost opportunity that you can’t buy [area D] beef anymore because it has to be reared and everything, but I think we just tweak the wording a little, to make it sound like it’s [area D] beef.

I: Yeah. But that’s the reasons probably, why the second initiative run by butchers failed, what about the first one? You mentioned something about the lack of good management. What types, what kind of management?

R: The second one.

I: No, the first one.

R: The second one really failed, just because the council pulled the funding. The council was funding it and…

I: And why the council decided to…

R: Because they were short of money.

I: Ah, okay.

R: It was only meant as a short-term thing. There was study into the feasibility of it and the plant was far too big and the council then pulled the funding and said, they weren’t going to fund it anymore. They’d done it for five years, I think. So, they were going to stop it. The first one failed because of the costs of getting waste off, they don’t have to get waste off now because they’re so small, I think.

I: Well, the first one had to, because it was much more?

R: They were killing 100 a week. Yeah, so they had a huge waste disposal charge, it was the main thing that was crippling it. And, there was a manager there for a while and he sold a lot of beef somewhere and he never got paid for it, which didn’t help the balance sheet…

I: So, it was kind of marketing kind of thing?

R: …and, I think, yeah, that was just bad running. Bad management. And as I said, the market changed a little, in that, south can’t do beef and Wales can’t do beef came in and took some of the market that they’d had and the transport costs were far too big and to survive they were looking at supplying Tesco’s, North of Inverness, I think, from memory.

I: …So, because there was a time Tesco, because Tesco was in for supermarkets, somewhere in the middle, kind of customer, it’s not very premier, like Sainsbury’s or Waitrose, I mean, more max centred, might be more premium customers, so probably it’s like Boots as an added value like [area D], you would probably need to target supermarkets.

R: Yeah, well, I think, part of the problem was that, to target supermarkets, the throughput wasn’t big enough.

I: So?

R: So, the chap would get a deal with the supermarket, if you don’t have enough product…

I: Ah, you mean, and why it didn’t, they didn’t have enough for them? I mean, are you talking about, which one of the two initiatives first of all?

R: Right. Supplying Tesco’s.

I: No, no. Which initiative, the one with the butchers?

R: The first one. The butchers are totally, their own shops.

I: They don’t export, okay? So, the first one?

R: They might have exported the odd carcass, but basically, they’re supplying their own shops in [area D] for the locals.

I: Okay. So, the first one?

R: The first initiative, they were setting up they collected money, from farmers that put money in. And then, because they were going to upgrade their facilities to suit Tesco’s, but then they decided that it was losing money and they closed the door before they would totally go into liquidation.

I: But then what, you mentioned they didn’t have enough volumes, that because the farmers, they didn’t commit enough to the co-operative or because the Tesco, didn’t commit enough to?

R: I, don’t know the detail, but, if you’re only killing 80 cattle a week, and struggling to find that for three months of the year, you can’t really go and supply a big supermarket chain. Because, they want a 1,000 a week. I think they were going to have a niche product in their stores, North Inverness was the idea and [area D] could perhaps have supplied that.

I: So pretty much, [area D], you think that it doesn’t have really, the ability to supply, big quantities, 52 weeks a year?

R: A lot of the farms in [area D] can’t finish cattle really, because the land’s not good enough. They can’t take the cattle through to slaughter because their land’s not good enough. And the frost system, because you’ve to import the feed, and because you’re out on another island, instead of costing £50 to take feed home, it’s costing you then £75, more than farmers on the mainland, so it’s far better to put the cow down there. And, as it is now, with the new subsidy scheme, we’ve got a couple of calf support, so every calf, we get paid on.

I: Which means, what is the effect? More…

R: Like in, from 2004, so we got the island calf scheme. It went, when they stopped headage payments, when each cow got paid, and each steer in 2004, I think, when we got a calf payment before but we got the island calf scheme started 2011 or 12 maybe.

I: Which means more incentives for store animals rather than?

R: Yeah. On the mainland you get paid, is it around 100 euros and we get 150 or 60, on the islands, per calf. For every calf that’s born and reaches a month old, you get paid 160 euros. So, because of that, farmers say, oh well, if I keep another five bulls, I could get another five calves, I get another 800 euros, so rather than hold onto the cattle longer, they keep more breeding cows and it’s maintained the number of beef-breeding cows in [area D]. I think, this last year, where nationally, it’s still dropping, or it was.

I: So, the final is, do you go towards the direction of store animals or finishing animals?

R: Store.

I: Store? Okay.

R: But, that’s what I’m saying, we used to finish everything off, but now, we’re maybe finish 20 per cent, 25 per cent, the rest goes store and we’ve increased our cows from 90 to 110.

I: What would be the impact on your farm if afterwards, sheep, beef cattle farming is dramatically reduced or ceased altogether?

R; What was that, sorry?

I: What would be the impact on your farm, if upland sheep, beef cattle farming is dramatically reduced or ceased altogether? So, if, for any reason, no sheep, no beef cattle in [area D]. What would be the…

R: The farm would turn into a wilderness.

I: So, you think the [area D] farming community can’t survive going, you know, in other…

R: Either beef or sheep, there’s no really other options. No-one wants to milk cows. Too tying.

I: So, from that list, which is about the kind of solutions, mitigations on the potential loss on [inaudible]. Which of those, what sort of solutions are you trying to respond to, the pressures we’re discussing before, if there is anything missing from there? And for those solutions you apply, which one, I mean, do you think that they are work?

R: For my business or for [area D]?

I: Yes, for your business. Are they working at a [inaudible] level, what sort of constraints limits your efforts? I’m really sorry, there’s a lot to read.

R: Yeah.

I: If you need me to explain anything of those?

R: The first one there’s to reduce stocking rate. I would say in [area D], that the stocking rate has reduced. The number of breeding cows has not reduced drastically, but cattle in [area D] are going far earlier. They used to be, like yesterday there was 1,000 cattle at the market. In the past, there could have been 1700, at a similar sale, 15 to 1700, but you never see that numbers anymore because so many went at a year old in the spring, rather than being kept 18 months. It’s just the market changes, it’s probably done that in the subsidy thing. And there are far less cattle finished at [area D], as I said, because the abattoir has gone and the store market seems to over-compensate the price, nearly. Large number of farms have diversified.

I: In terms of what? Because they’re in a couple of different?

R: We diversified into holiday accommodation to get an income that was surer. Because, if the subsidy is taken away, there’s no farming left in [area D]. Unless the price of beef goes, because nobody’s going to make money. As you go around, you’ll see huge number of small wind turbines, which is another means of diversification; we looked at it and because we are close to a world heritage site, there was a whole lot of extra red tape and you couldn’t build it where you wanted to because it broke the skyline. So, we ditched that idea.

I And also, I realise that you were allowed only to get small turbines instead of big ones, was that true or not? Because the big turbines, but in [area D] you are allowed, pretty much, all you have incentives, it wasn’t clear in my mind, whether it’s, there are more incentives for the small ones, rather than the big ones, or if, pretty much, it’s, there is no, any other, kind of, restriction, legal restriction, or whether…

R: The feed-in tariff, they speak about in the small ones are far greater.

I: Okay. So, what’s tariff?

R: For very unit of power, you produce, a small wind turbine will be getting 37 pence and you can buy the power for about 13 from a grid. So, I’m not sure who’s paying for it, but, if you’ve got a big turbine, you can be down to four and a half pence for feed-in tariff. But the big ones are far more efficient but then you’ve got all these hoops to jump through to build them and it’s a huge amount of money. Where a small one, just about any farmer could go and get a loan and build the small wind turbines and 20 kilowatt and a huge number did, but then the internal grid got choked up. One or two were refused planning laterally. I think…

I: So, planning permissions for these, was kind of…

R: Yeah, and we would have had a bit of a headache because you can see us from the world heritage site and you couldn’t break the skyline so you had to put it down in a hole which meant it wasn’t going to be so efficient because it wasn’t catching the wind and it was going to be hard to get it to fix if it broke because it was so far off the road. So, we decided against it rightly or wrongly.

I: Are you talking about your farm or the whole farming community?

R: Our farm. I mean, there’s a lot of farms put them up, and then they had no problem getting them up but because of us being close to this heritage site, it was, you would have had to pay somebody to do surveys and you had no idea. And, I think, it was going to be quite tight for time to get it done, as well, before the cut the feed-in tariff. So, we just decided against it. It was a personal decision.

I: Before, you mentioned the problem with the geese. So, just very quickly, what is the problem and your march through there coming?

R: It’s changed, the problem with geese, ‘til about 10 years ago, we had terrible problem with them all winter. We could have anything up to 2,000 geese, which is equivalent of 400 sheep. They wouldn’t be there all the time but they would be there sometimes and then, at that time, I grew quite a lot of swedes, turnips, and if it came hard weather, they would just decimate them. But, we had two really extreme winters and the geese numbers thinned out then and then the next winter, there, previous to 2011 there were very few shooters came to [area D], but since 2011, there are goose guides here and shooting groups and the winter geese are not a problem anymore.

I: I lost the detail. What is shooter?

R: Shooting guides.

I: Ah. Shooting guides. Okay, because I heard sugar all the time and was thinking…

R: Business men from south, they come up here, they’re up here now, first of September, they’ll be here ‘til the end of January and they’ll get people with loads of money to come up, spend a week shooting and they’ll take them round and they’ve paid farmers some money to keep their land for them, and that, the winter geese numbers, if anything, have reduced but we’ve got a huge problem with resident geese. The ones that stay here the whole year, they breed at home, we don’t have massive problem the whole year, we get them from mid-July on, but there are farms that are nearer nesting areas and they really have massive problems with the geese that are here. There was an initiative with SNH, RSPB were on it and then they left and they had the shooting which are net-maintained the number, the resident geese but never reduced it and that initiative, sort of, finished now.

I: What kind of [inaudible], what were they trying to do in practice in order to manage the geese population?

R: They set up a few guys that went around in groups, shooting the geese in August before the migrating in, in September, before the migrating ones came but, they just maintained, but they stopped it increasing and it went from very little to twenty-odd-thousand, in about 10 years and there are farms that are really badly caught.

I: So, in the map, where is the main problem with the key issues?

R: Well we’re here and we had huge problems in the winter.

I: With the geese?

R: With the geese, yeah. We’re actually there. No, we are there. That’s us there, but up around here, massive problems and about here, they used to have no problem but…

[Interruption]

R: The shooting pressure, there was a lot of problems here but they got someone to chase them off there.

I: So from [island 6] there was a problem?

R: There was a problem there, but it wasn’t any bigger, I don’t think, than anywhere else, but they had some sort of initiative and they moved them off or, they keep on chasing them but because there’s shooters that stay there and shoot this area…

I: So, can you spell the area because just to have it, it’s around [area 1]?

R: Yeah. Well, we’re really bad when it’s north of [area 1]. Around [area 2] and the whole of the west mainland is bad and there are pockets in the east mainland that are really bad as well.

I: Around, what is the islands of?

R: There. Around [island 7] and [island 8], they’re bad as well, but these islands used to have very little problem and they have quite a major problem now and particularly the last year, [island 2] and [island 4] has been bad.

I: Okay. So, it’s growing a bit? Except [island 6], all the rest is growing?

R: I think the geese have sort of been, because they’re being shot here, the whole time, in a way, they’re less of a problem, but they’ve just moved out of here. They’re quite clever. We saw it in the winter time the numbers now that we used to get but then they’re being shot. You waken every morning now, to gunshots.

I: Okay. So, just, were we there?

R: I don’t know if we were anywhere there. Reduce beef…

I: They’re talking we shot, improve, the second one, improve efficiency of resources. So, is that kind of…

R: [Inaudible] about the farming, because you don’t know how much they made.

I: Yeah. Pretty much, you’ve spread it to there?

R: The only waste we have is plastic which we’ve been burning and it’s going to be banned. So, we’re going to have to find someone to recycle that. Labour optimisation, farmers have been trying that for the last 50 years probably and the same with asset utilisation.

I: Successful or not?

R: Probably, I mean, there’s been grants, for buildings, and we put up large buildings to make the thing more labour efficient.

I: But you don’t seem convinced of the effect they…the success it was?

R: I mean, 25 years ago, one man, 40/50 cows was the norm and now, it’s quite normal one man, 100 cows. So, the efficiency has improved. Machinery has got bigger but I don’t know if it’s because you’re busier doing [inaudible they would be a bigger.

I: [inaudible, with all these changes around. Just to write down one to three tomorrow, okay. And then which one is 11, [person name]…good. If I survive this week. I think I’m going to finish the project. Sorry, I…

R: Efficiency has increased, definitely. On the farm home and every other farm in [area D], I would think, more or less.

I: You said, more machinery, but is it, could be something bigger?

R: Machinery is larger, so you can do more.

I: But is a good thing or a bad thing? Because it’s…

R: You can do the work faster but you have to be more, you’re doing more so you need a bigger machine to do it, in the same time. So, you can do more work in the same time.

I: But I got also, from some other interviewees, they said that it is not always proportion to the land you have. So, sometimes farmers tend to get big machinery which pretty much, there’s a lot of fixed course coming with that.

R: A lot of people come to [area D] think the [inaudible] machinery here is totally nuts, totally over the top, but they’ve got very small windows of opportunity and that is the downside again of environmental schemes. Because everyone now wants to cut silage on the first of July where before we used to start cutting silage in the middle of June and you cut silage on until the middle of July but now everybody’s on a scheme, you can’t cut it ‘til the first of July, so everybody wants to cut on the first of July.

I: So that’s why they’re getting their own machinery? Instead of outsourcing and waiting in line. Ah, okay. Good. Actually, you’re the first one saying that, because that is effect of bit of…

R: We have a problem in that, to try and help the wildlife, you've got your barley, you should be harvesting now and then you leave that stubble lying all winter and you can’t plough it until the first of March, so you can get a nice dry spell in February but contractors can’t get any work done because you can’t do it until the first of March.

I: Because of the sheep?

R: Because of the scheme. Yeah.

I: Okay.

R: So, it’s the schemes, all tighten up bottle-necks and it all increases the amount of machinery needed for this small weather window.

I: Brilliant. Brilliant that you said, because no-one has told me that kind of effect. Okay. Good.

R: Share resources/labour. Well it does happen but farmers tend to be very independent as a whole.

I: Why, has that happened? Obviously, one was the reason that you just said, because everyone has to do it a little when…

R: The farmer, hates watching his neighbour doing a job and him not doing it. I don’t know. I mean there is quite a bit of sharing goes on but it’s certainly not, I wouldn’t say, it’s on the increase. There might have been more sharing 30 years ago than there is now.

I: Yeah, that’s why I’m asking. Because, in the past, it seems to be much more sharing while now, obviously one reason might be because the everyone has to do it in the shorter window of time. But are there any other reasons?

R: I think previously, that farmer I think was more relaxed 30 years ago. You wanted to do a job, you wanted to get it done and you wanted to get it done now. I definitely work longer hours now, but we’re the only industry that works longer hours now than they did.

I: So, before they were relaxed, while now, you, anyone, all of the people, they want to do it now.

R: Now. They want it done now and they want it done fast and that’s partly the reason why there’s more machinery and, like I say, they don’t want to go and help their neighbour do his and then him come and help them second. So he buys his own machine. Part of it would maybe show that farming on the whole has been profitable. And farmers hate paying tax, they go and buy a machine to save tax.

I: Ah. Okay. So, buying machinery, it saves also tax?

R: For a lot of farmers, buying a machine is like having a new toy. But, there’s that side to it too.

I: That’s also to do with the kind of prestige that it may give you in the local community.

R: Yeah. And there are farmers that have very few machines and they just look after their stock and they employ someone to come in with their machines and do most of their work but, I don’t think that’s on the increase either. I think that there are a lot of people that used to use, or a few people that would’ve have used someone else to do their work are now buying their own machines.

I: So, but, if you see that from outside, this is a kind of inefficient way or not? It depends how well you’ve balanced the fixed costs because buying all this machinery means a lot of debt, a lot of fixed costs.

R: But getting poor quality product to feed the cattle on. Because you can’t get it done at the right time; if you don’t have it.

I: Okay. So, there is a balance between that as well?

R: It’s not just the cost of doing it, it’s what you might lose if you don’t get a proper product.

I: Are there enough contractors or are they very few? So pretty much…

R: There’s a lot. Yeah.

I: A lot of contractors? Okay. So if you would like to…

R: On the mainland anyway, some of the smaller islands don’t have many but it’s quite a competitive business and because the weather window is not huge, it used to be you cut silage in the rain but now, no-one wants to do that, so that, and as I say, environmental schemes have tightened the whole thing up.

I: So, chronologically, when is the window? I mean, over the months, which is the windows, you have in your mind? This is the window, time-window I need to, pretty much, catch up?

R: Harvest, for example, we had a fantastic spell of weather for cutting the barley, two weeks ago. It’s been raining really for two weeks, previous to that, we had a fantastic week but the barley was barely ready to cut, so no-one wanted it cut and then the day before the weather changed, everyone wanted it cut. And it’s rained every day for two weeks, there’s just been an hour here, three hours there and…

I: But in terms of the…

R: …the quality of that was, there’s supposed to be this, 60 miles-an-hour wind coming tomorrow and you’ve got upright barley, it could end up on the ground, so, and that’s an example of when you don’t have a machine, in this small weather-window you’ve got.

I: I was asking for the time-window that the environmental schemes allow you? Which is pretty much, fixed?

R: Well that’s…

I: And the weather, yeah, I understand, this is quite good.

R: It’s like I say, I mean, previously, a fair per cent of the silage was cut in the second half of June, but you go on an environmental scheme, you have to leave it ‘til the first of July and then there’s farmers did it in July anyway, but now I think there’s 250/300 farmers in schemes in [area D]. In environmental schemes, and most of them will have silage to cut on the first of July. So that’s taking, well even if you take half of them, move them from June into July, it obviously shortens the window for the contractors to make money in their machine but it also reduces their…

I: It happens, like, in Edinburgh, for example, August is always very wet. It happens the same here or not?

R: No two years is the same. It’s, I mean, if you were to get a week of rain on the first of July, if it rained for a week then, it would really cause a backlog with silage and the feed value of that silage would decrease quite considerably, if it’s left for a week. Because it gets, and now with harvest, it’s not just because of the environmental schemes, it’s just the weather, this year, just when you needed a nice week of weather and it would have tidied the harvest up nicely, we’ve had two weeks of rain. It’s looking like wind; it might fall off and land on the ground. Total loss. Last year was bad as well, it was so mild and it went flat and then it started growing and the hay in that grain, was, pretty much, useless.

I: So, but the next one which is about utilization of technical innovation. Do you see farmers, they try to get to the new type of technologies, to? And usually, what type of technologies they apply to make their farm more resilient?

R: You got anything from just buying up-to-date machinery. One example would be satellite guidance on the machinery. So, it’s the right place. It used to be all done by eye and you would guess and you were so far out from there and you would be overlapping and you would be missing bits, but now there’s quite a bit of different farms on it, that’s one thing. Computer records, probably more efficient than paper records. Quite a number of farmers in [area D] would weigh cattle regularly and I don’t know if any are trying the variable inputs after soil sampling every; instead of soil sampling once a quarter, one sample for a whole field, you would take 30 samples and then, have a machine that can, they were trying to get some interest in that in [area D] but I’m not sure if they’re there yet or not. But that would be another example. Milk recording on a dairy farm would be one, by computerised recording in the milking parlour.

I: Okay. Is that for dairy farmers?

R: Yeah. There are beef, some are using electronic tags for recording.

I: How will electronic tags make them more resilient?

R: I don’t know if it makes them more resilient but it just helps the efficiency of the thing which in turn…

I: It makes it more resilient…

R: Because dyslexia is quite a problem in agriculture, as well. Dyslexia and reading an ear-tag on an animal, you get some of the numbers mixed up. So, you’ve got problems there. So that would cut that out. Diverse and new agriculture income sources, you’re sort of limited to what you can do there, as I said before, in [area D].

I: So, there is not many crops you can, pretty much?

R: No. And, non-farms, I said about that. There’s a huge amount of holiday accommodation, wind turbines, a few solar panels, so that would all be…

I: Are there anyone that is more, kind of, involved in downstream, like, trying to do any kind of processing of…

R: There’s odd ones tried it. but there’s not many. There is the one farm, he’s diversified into water buffalo. So, buffalos, doesn’t sound right, water buffalos and he would be retailing meat but it’s difficult to; unless you’ve only got a small farm, it’s difficult to pay attention to the breeding, and the rearing of animals and the retailing, unless you’ve got a partner that’s focused on the one. So, there are some doing that, but it’s quite limiting once again, because most of the animals goes to a, it’s limited what you can do. Shared resources but I said about that before. Modify degree…

I: Modify degree of resilience from subsidies.

R: Yeah. I think all farmers would want to be able to do it without subsidies but due to the high cost here, it’s not looking very likely in the near future. And like that, well you could say that EU regulation has killed local abattoirs. It was, why wait to get rid of all the waste south, from the abattoir to here, so, facilities were lost. Everything’s getting bigger. I think it’s limited what we have in local shop market channels. It’s, because we’re so much one product and there’s no population.

I: So, pretty much, 11 is not applicable here? Twelve? I need to get some water, would you like some water?

R: No, I’m okay.

I: ‘Cause I was starting getting dizzy.

R: You don’t want that.

I: What about, I think it was number 12?

R: Number 12, reserve production capacity. I don’t know that that’s…

I: For example, an example I was given for some farmer was like, he rented the land, extra land in order to subsidy the years there wasn’t enough grazing, just to put the cows in that extra land for a couple of years and then he came back to normal. So, it’s like, reserving the capacity, of his own land, something like that. I don’t know, if it makes sense?

R: I mean, there would have been farms that were really badly hit by the wet in 2015 and they would probably have lost some of their production capacity that year. And…

I: I think there was quite a breaking point for some of the farmers, in [area D], that year.

R: Yeah. It caused all sorts of problems. That is probably our two biggest threats. There is, what happens with subsidies of the fear that they may disappear and weather is a nature impact.

I: Wet weather?

R: Yeah.

I: Or not?

R: Whatever’s sort of bad, cold, wet, wind, it’s always causing us problems.

I: Thirteen? What is 13?

R: Increase strategic visibility, [voices overlap]…

I: That’s to do more about the awareness about what…

R: …consumers and things. And it’s back to that same problem because we are not supplying a processor really.

I: You don’t really know what the consumer really wants?

R: Yeah. The consumer doesn’t know what they want anyway, they’re the dealers. The supermarkets tell us what the consumer wants but it’s just the supermarkets excuse to do something and say the consumer wants this. But the consumer’s no idea. Some do, but the majority just go in and look at the price and…

I: And the effect of the availability of the choices they are given from the supermarkets?

R: You’ve got those, no doubt, that go in and will only buy organic, they’ve got those that will only buy British, you've got those, but on the whole, the majority, in my thinking, buy on price, and that’s the main driver and we’re not supplying them markets, so, we certainly look at what the market wants and get our breeding right for that, but it’s limited what we can do to... We need to be aware of consumer trends to try and produce what the consumer [inaudible]…

I: So, you are breeding based on what your customers want or what the messages that your customer’s getting from their customers? You’re breeding based on what the final consumers want or breeding just your…?

R: It ends to be more what is wanted in the abattoirs.

I: Okay and hopefully the abattoirs got it right, the messages? Yeah.

R: But if that, like, a few years ago, the abattoir would take any weight of cattle and then suddenly they got too much so they said we don’t want it above a certain weight, so that affected how the finishers acted. Then probably all felt a bit when the farmers in [area D] wanted to sell cattle and how they would rear them.

I: So, making sure enough left, to turn it off. Good.

R: So, there is, it has an effect, but there’s limited how we can, what we can do and because the breeding is such a long-term, if you buy a bull, it’s three years before, or two years minimum before we’ve got anything to sell from that bull. So, it’s such a long-term thing, it’s limited, but we’re always trying to improve but it doesn’t always work.

I: Not from this project but from another I was doing, for EBV values, it seems that in the UK, the abattoirs, the way they work, they don’t use the EBV values as to evaluate the value of the carcasses they’re getting in. So, pretty much, the breeding is not really connected with the type of carcasses and the quality of the carcasses they are producing and that was; so, if in the future we managed to link the EBV values with the quality of the carcasses and the farmers, they are being paid on the quality based on the EBV values, then the whole thing is going to work more systematically. But now…

R: Hopefully there will be a tie up with this beef efficiency scheme, that some of us are doing.

I: Ah, so you are involved with that? Yeah.

R: Mainly because there was money for it and we’re doing all the recording of it, anyway, so, one would hope that through time.

I: So, that beef efficiency scheme, what would differences you see, you put in place, obviously because of the scheme, but that really makes your farm more resilient?

R: Hopefully, you should get information back. It hasn’t happened yet, but through time, hopefully, you get information back on, that will be better than what EBVs are, on breeding stock. It’s helped, there’s numerous farmers have bought weights, a weigh system and they will weigh an individual animal because you’ve to record weights, so numerous farmers have bought weights so that gives them a better idea of what cows have the good breeders. Which makes it more profitable and more resilient.

I: But you haven’t seen a lot of that?

R: We’re not far enough in to get, we’ve got no information back. Through time, they slaughter them and the animal information should hopefully be available to the breeder. I think some of the abattoirs do have it but probably nobody looks. But, EBV is part of the problem that are not paid attention to by a lot of farmers, because, the pedigree breeders had put false information in, so they don’t always, they’re not, so EBVs are not always accurate.

I: Because?

R: Because the breeders, the pedigree breeders are putting in false information.

I: Ah. Okay.

R: Some of them anyway. And…

I: Do they do it consciously, or unconsciously?

R: Some of them, yeah. Because they don’t want, they don’t want to have bad EBVs.

I: Okay. So, they’re not accurate?

R: No. I mean, they would say they’re accurate but some of, they could be more accurate, I think, if the recording was more exact. I think they’re working on it but it’s difficult to police. Where were we? Fourteen?

I: Which number?

R: Are we on 14 now?

I: Fourteen.

R: No, they’re consumer trends, we did, but that’s flexibility, increase supply chain and visibility. Yeah, we did that. Did we not? Yeah. Financial readiness.

I: Do you use a lot more insurance, more savings or try to diverse your farm activities in order to?

R: We’ve thought about diversifying more. The only person who makes money out of insurance is the insurance company. That’s not right, I mean, we have insurance on various things. We don’t have much savings but we have diversified and I would think quite a lot of farmers would have done that to be more resilient. Even from my time maybe, but away back, very few farmers wives worked off-farm, they would do odd jobs around the farm but there’s very few farmers wives that don’t have off-farm income now, which is just another diversification. The use of renewable energy, there’s plenty of folk producing it. In [area D], we’re probably all using it, whether we like it or not, because it’s in the grid. I don’t think it’s happened being resilient to produce it is because it’s a diversification but I don’t think using renewable energy against nuclear, or whatever, is helping us. Increase physical and electronic security.

I: That has to do with data you record a bit more now. There is probably the, for example if the system breaks down and pretty much, if there is a virus or whatever, they might lose this data, not only your data but also the dah-dah-dah, SAC or Scottish Government here or yeah?

R: Disaster. The country grinds to a halt. Yeah.

I: And physical security, has to do with it may be relative to farms but most of the times, it’s about manufactures, whether these are areas that are, pretty much, is closed to the public. There is no access, pretty, much, in order to increase the security because…

R: We can’t do that because there’s the right to roam. Yeah. We’re quite, I mean, the other night we had a problem, we had the dogs. We’re quite good in [area D], I mean, numerous people in Orkney would rarely lock their house doors, on farms anyway. So, security’s not a major, but it could become bigger because there are changes…

I: I realise that we’ve, pretty much, run out of time but just because I’ve actually realised, we haven’t covered those from the previous one. So, have a look on those and then I have to go downstairs if the next interviewee came and just ask for 15 minutes. If you want, we can start with those. So, do you, any of those threats, and how they affect, how important they are for your farm? Some of them, you've already have discussed but, you can say number five, it’s a kind of, big thread.

I: Again, we have 15 minutes yeah.

R: Okay. [inaudible] huge. And this year we’re looking at expensive feed for the winter. Some people sell cattle sooner to prevent having to pay that, so that affects business and then you get all sorts of problems again with keeping the cash flow. If you sell sooner, the cash flow goes like that and then you've got these big drops, where you’ve nothing.

I: So, it increases, the cash flow?

R: If you sell cattle sooner, you get this burst but then there’s a long guddle, if you go back into your normal system. Sadly, the farmer really has no control over the price he gets at the end or the price he pays at the start. And the uneven…

I: The price of the product or the input?

R: What you buy, when you go to buy something you just get told the price of it and you can negotiate a bit but that’s the price, take it or leave it. You’re used to it and when you sell it, you go to the market, you put it in the ring or you put it in the abattoir and that’s the price they’re going to pay that week and you’ve no control over what you get. Except, you can, if you go to the live market, you can take it home, if it’s in the abattoir and it’s dead and hanging up, it has to stay there. And I think that the supply chain really needs a big shake up.

I: Like what?

R: Well there’s somebody making money that’s not getting back to the primary producer.

I: Okay. So, who is that, is the abattoir, the retailer?

R: I’m certainly not making money. The retailer tries to say they’re not making money but somebody should be. But I don’t think competition for the alternative land use is that massive in [area D].

I: So, for forestry or conservation…

R: There’s no forestry here.

I: …conservation or…

R: Conservation, there are some going into that but most people are in environmental schemes, most privately owned.

I: And also for gain, I think this is more in the mainland.

R: Shooting and sports. But I mean, the shooting just fits in around the agriculture here. Increasing dependence on financial institutions. Yeah, that would, I don’t know whether it’s a threat or not, it can be an opportunity in helping you to expand your business. Subsidies is a huge threat, as you know. You've probably been told that already, through Brexit.

I: But what type of subsidies do you want? Because it used to be linked with the production volumes then became land-based and then, now there is a tendency to go to environmental schemes and also now with Brexit, there is a lot of discussion to pay farmers, not for the food production, rather for environmental public good. They deliver, so what type of subsidies you would like to see? Because obviously, each one of those, has completely different effect?

R: Yeah. As far as [area D] goes, I would say the payment on the calf when it’s a month old is quite a good subsidy because it helps keep production there and when you've got production, that helps the whole community…

I: But still it’s not finishing the animal?

R: No, but if you, there’s someone else that’s willing to do that and can do it cheaper than we can; so we can produce the animal here, the farmer that’s producing the animal, has to go and buy feed, he has to go and buy fertilizer, he needs a new tractor, he needs a tractor repaired, he needs a new building, he needs the vet, he needs the SAC to help him fill in forms online. Well if you go all down the road like they think in Westminster that it should all be an environmental measures and there’s no incentive to produce any food, we’ don’t need to spend much in the local suppliers if you go down the environmental route and question about how much benefit all their environmental measures actually are. If you take…

I: Because of the examples you say, you gave before, like if you get that sheep or a…

R: Well not only that, I mean, if you take stock off, it’s not all good for the environment because they provide a good environment for wildlife.

I: But also, it’s not only the impact for the farming landscape one thing, another thing is about the local community, like income, employment, health or culture or whatever, and then obviously there is food security for the nation. So, …

R: BBC did a programme last week, The Dark Side of Dairy…

I: Ah. Okay. What was the message there?

R: Well, they discovered they were exporting calves from Scotland to Ireland. Then down to southern Ireland across to Spain and everybody was, this is terrible, it was only 5,000 calves. I don’t know how many dairy cows there are now but it was a fairly small percentage were being exported. The alternative is that nobody really wants them in this country so they shoot them at birth but then the BBC went and they found them loading cattle in Hungary onto a ship in bad conditions and they found the slaughter-house in Egypt but they tried to say that was cattle that had come from Britain.

And the message was that we were all bad because we were exporting calves; but the message should be, don’t buy anything from anywhere other than Britain or EU because you have no idea what conditions they’re being treated in. We’re so heavily regulated here, but yet, we’re still, and like you said, food security, that nobody seems to pick up on that. They always seem to be pointing the finger at the farmer, or [inaudible]. And the guy from Compassion in World Farming was annoyed because they saw the lorry driver hitting an animal. Well, he’s obviously never tried to load a lorry because you’ll never load it without hitting the, a certain amount. And you get all these idiots voicing their opinions and that’s a major threat there.

I: So, media?

R: Media, yeah. It was totally biased. It was totally wrong that programme. They had a dairy farmer interviewed and he was in tears nearly, because they were taking the calf away from the cow; well I used to work in dairy farming and I never saw a cow bat an eyelid at losing its calf when it’s a day old and the calf took to being hand-fed perfectly well.

I: What is the effect of those kind of [inaudible] be? Do you think that Orkney can use those [inaudible] in any possible way because they produce really good quality of meat and these [inaudible] are supposed to like those kind of, good quality... Do you think that there is any chance they…

R: But, it’s like I say, it’s a niche market and it’s difficult to hit a niche market, especially when you don’t have a local abattoir anymore and the thing should have worked but probably regulation prevented it, to a great extent. I…

I: Okay, the other things about Brexit, because obviously, there’s subsidies but there is also a free access to the European market and tariff protection. What about have we got to the WTO groups?

R: Yeah. If we end up under the WTO rules and end up in a world market, we are screwed, I would think. A major fear that, I mean, you know, you've got all this beef produced in America that is full of hormones and washed in the chlorine and chickens and stuff. And, if that gets allowed and free access to Britain and there’s no tariffs to stop stuff coming in from South America that’s produced at a fraction of the cost of what we can…

I: There was one that I have already mentioned that okay, we can go, for example, and export to China or whatever but it seems, for example, that China, they still value the EU standards; so do you think, for example, the UK goes for WTO rules and then they breed the farmers, they still decide to produce in the European standards just to access these markets, or do you think it is an impossible scenario? Or, pretty much, if we go…

R: I think it’s very unlikely that any of our standards will reduce.

I: Ah, okay. Even if there is no regulatory kind of, because now it’s, you have to do it, you like it or not?

R: But when it came out of Europe. Britain never watered anything down, they always made it stricter, if anything. They took it to extreme. They were always scared they’d get caught out, so they always did everything and I can’t see that’s going to change and they’ll not want to drop standards, I don’t think, even if they don’t have EU regulations. But the biggest problem is that food inflation is seen as a huge cost to the general public. If can keep the price of food down and keep inflation down through that, it’s quite a good, for the government to get votes, to stay in. If food inflation goes up, nobody will like that government, so, the supermarkets are far too powerful and the government don’t want to hurt them because they’re keeping food cheap for everybody and keeping inflation down and everything. So…

I: Even if they do it in the way that is, we don’t know if that kind of backing power they exercise over the suppliers…

R: Well. Yeah and then, but the problem is that because the government wants cheap food and the population wants cheap food, if there’s a deal to be done to sell something they see as high value, like finance, or technology at a cost to cheap food coming in, they’ll take the cheap food in, would be my fear. And then we are stuck.

I: Cheaper than from elsewhere, you mean, not British, yeah?

R: Not British, take food in, I mean, South America is the big, and America, big worry, huge supplies of beef and an increase in vegan population, also.

I: There is later on, you see, when you go to the source of drivers you will see that there is a lot of…

R: I did look through them and my memory, yeah, broadband’s been a huge problem to us. Just even for…

I: But now, it’s not any longer, or not, it’s still a big thing?

R: Yeah. We’ve ditched the landline really. We bought a thing that’s like a mobile mast, a telephone signal to get broadband because our landline was so hopeless. It was just painfully slow to do any of the agricultural forms and everything has to be done online, nearly, now. Succession is always a problem I guess. And the sad thing is that farms continually get bigger and it doesn’t help the local economy.

I: Can you explain a bit more about that?

R: Well it doesn’t help the local economy but when you go to some of the outer islands, it’s improved maybe, more recently because people would then work from England would come up here to get away from the crowds and they can work online remotely, but previous to that, if farms were getting bigger and you had nobody in the community, you had all these people that went to some of these outer islands for the good life and lived on benefits but didn’t really put anything back into the community. And these small farms…

I: So you are thinking about the newcomers?

R: I’m not speaking, I’m just saying three small farms are far more beneficial to the community than one big farm because the smaller farms tend to be more intensive and they spend more. Three small farms will spend more than one big farm in the community, so, and you've got more children going to the school and things. But I don’t know how you stop that. It’s just succession been, keep getting bigger.

I: It’s quite interesting that you mention that with the small farms because in the UK, there is always that kind of tendency to value very much, the skills of the economy. So, wherever it’s big, it’s good...

R: I think it’s rubbish.

I: Yeah. So, I wonder if that’s true, it’s …

R: It’s less maybe with beef but you've got these dairy farms that have got 1,000 cows. Because of that 1,000 cows, they can’t graze them, because they’d have to go far too far from the building, so, they’re kept inside for the whole year.

I: But this is for dairy, yeah?

R: Just for dairy farming, but they’re kept inside all year now. So, you’ve got the added expense of burning fuel to take feed into them, 12 months a year, instead of six months a year. So, the economy of scale’s gone. And if you've got 100 cows, you can know every cow individually and you’re the owner and you’re working with them, you've got a far greater passion for them than you do if you’re there getting five hundred pound a week for working stupid hours, milking these cows. If you've got a thousand of them, so, you’re never going to know one from the other, they’re all just black and white with four legs and a middle.

I: But for beef cattle or sheep, have you seen any differences between the small farmers and the big farmers? What kind of impact they for local community or the environment or?

R: There’s no definite rule of thumb, but the small farms can spend more time on keeping things tidy, looking better, keeping the infrastructure right and quite often, I mean, there are times that the small farms produce the best livestock. The big farms are not always the best but there’s no rule of thumb to it. I don’t think that…

I: So, there are cases that small farms, they might produce better quality of stock but…

R: They look after them, they give them that bit more…

I: …in terms of efficiency, kind of…

R: [inaudible] efficiency’s not that high but the profitability per animal would be higher.

I: Okay. Because of the quality of the animals?

R: Just part of it might be more efficient. The big farms, they tend to be understaffed and chasing their tail, the whole time, but, as I say, there’s no rule of thumb. But I would, you know, you can’t have tiny farms because the whole thing becomes inefficient but I don’t think you want to see them getting too big. And there is mention of subsidies being capped at a certain size. Reducing the subsidy, if you’ve got over a certain acreage or a certain, which I don’t think would be a bad idea. But ours would be, we don’t really like it, the NFU, the National Farmers Union is a bit against that because…

I: Can you explain that again? So, will reduce the subsidy?

R: If you’ve got 100,000 euros as a subsidy and you go above that, you get a reduction, five per cent or something.

I: Ah. There is that kind of…

R: It’s not yet, but it’s been talked about, the EU…

I: So you think it’s a good area?

R: I think it would be a good thing to do. I think, if they can’t, I mean you've got Lord [name] that’s bought all these farms because he’s made so much money selling [product name] and he’s got 25,000 of the best acres in England and he can’t make a profit without subsidy. So, should he be getting the same subsidy as somebody, per acre, as somebody that’s got 250? Because if you’ve got 250, normally smaller fields, you’ve got more field margins, you might have more hedges, you've more things that are good for the environment. When you go big, you’ve got this huge area, all one crop and then another huge area with another crop and the biodiversity is affected. Which, the farms in [area D], on a national basis, are not that big, so, it’s seems less.

I: So, when you say about not too small, not too big, can you have an indication of the size which is okay?

R: It’s just in my mind, I mean, I think that if you’ve got a hundred…

I: So, for [area D]? What means?

R: Well, if you’ve got, working small…

I: What means? Large?

R: …small would be, sort of, about 150 acres or less, would be quite small.

I: Okay. And in terms of animals?

R: Animal; you would be, on that you might have 40 or 50 breeding cows and a few sheep.

I: And when you describe large, what?

R: Large would be 1,000 plus acres and 300 cows.

I: How many people there are, with that?

R: Two. Plus a part-time maybe.

I: Are they involved, those two people in any of NFUs or?

R: There might be three but that size of farm you don’t have time. [person name], that we met?

I: Who?

R: [section deleted to maintain anonymity]

I: Yeah, yeah. So, he has a big farm?

R: Well he’s, sort of, yeah, he’s got a full-time worker. He’s got like 160 cows, I think, plus…

I: Who are the other two?

R: What’s that, sorry?

I: The other two, you said that there are three large farmers in [area D]?

R: No, no, there’s more than three

I: Ah, there’s more than three? Okay. I thought you said three.

R: No, I said, 300 hundred cows they would have but there’s various large farms. And some of them make a very good and produce quality product and everything’s great and there’s none that are that bad in [area D], to be fair, but I know when you go south; I originally came from Aberdeenshire and when I go back there and see, which is far easier to do with arable cropping, but the fences have all gone. The farm buildings have all been changed into houses and…

I: But not here, you mean in south?

R: No. And it’s just wall-to-wall cereals. There’s no livestock left, there’s no grass. There’s no biodiversity really, it’s just wall-to-wall wheat and barley and oil-seed rape and they can do that with huge machines and they’ve got 4,000 acres and they’ve got two or three people living in that, whereas, in the past, there would have been, maybe 12, 15 farms and that with three people in each one. And as I say, that’s not really happening in [area D], because there is a limit to how much stock one man can look after even with technology and machinery because there is the physical job of looking after the new-born calves.

I: Okay. Anything else from that list?

R: No, I don’t think anything of any, my time has gone.

I: Yes, so, pretty much.

R: [inaudible] veganism and vegetarians is a huge threat. And again, I think the media is biased towards them. I think, in particular the BBC.

I: So, in terms of infrastructure, about ferry connections, power integrator, abattoir, roads, broadband. How about ferry connections? Any comment?

R: We’ve got a good service, just now. There is the fear with this…England have banned live exports, you see. How do you differentiate between crossing the channel to France from England and us going to Aberdeen? We don’t want to lose; I mean, we’ve got a fantastic service just now. It’s worked well this last year. It’s high welfare, conditions they run in et cetera but there always is a fear with the export with animals that we; all the islands need it, but [area D] in particular. Because of the large numbers. I hope you’re making some sense of this?

I: No, no, I make a lot of sense. Thank you for your time and especially thank you for coming and taking it. I hope I didn’t disturb your whole programme?

R: No, It was pouring with rain.

I: Thank you very much. Bye-bye.

**End of transcription**