



Making a Living from Local Food 2017 **Anne Bannatyne & Rod Slater, SaladBrew** Borgue (Kirkcudbright, Dumfries & Galloway)



Anne and Rod moved to Borgue to establish Salad Brew as a retirement project three years ago in April 2015, inspired by a visit to Achiltibuie Gardens whilst on holiday up north. Rod works on this full-time, whilst Anne travels to Glasgow three days/week for her research post at Glasgow University.

Their produce, grown mainly hydroponically, includes salad leaves, herbs, tomatoes and strawberries, and this year they are starting out on chillies and microgreens. There are also plans for increasing productivity by developing plots outside and they are collaborating with a local chef to produce a range of chutneys, tomato sauces and other tomato products. All this is sold to individual regular customers, via Farmers Markets, a couple of cafes and shops, and increasingly to premium restaurants.

They started from growing small amounts mostly for a few individual customers two years ago and have since travelled a long way on an interesting journey. Participation in the *Making a Living from Local Food 2017* Programme in their second year helped them to think bigger and the MLLF mentors have really helped with asking difficult questions and giving pointers.

Specifically, it helped focus their thinking on how to approach the problems involved in growing the business and the need to develop their marketing strategies - building up a larger customer-base more systematically, the importance of negotiating better ('understand what questions to ask') and prioritising some types of customers. Seeing others' examples especially helped them 'to see what these early stages look like and understand that this is a journey that has to be made. It provided a glimpse into the future.' Networking with others in the programme was really valuable in that it also taught them 'lots of really useful little things from hearing and seeing their experiences', has given them confidence, and '...it confirmed why we are doing this, and that we are not alone with these challenges.'



It is clear that for Anne and Rod wider contacts and examples, partly gathered through the programme, are important sources of inspiration. They mentioned ambitious examples such as the London [Growing Underground](#) project and the "[Preston Model](#)" of encouraging local government to build a strong local economy, creating employment and keeping profits in the community. Anne is busily involved in the local Community Food Growers Network, and the [Ayrshire Biosphere](#) project. They hope that soon they will be able to contribute to this, e.g. by sharing skills or hosting trainees: '...in the UK, horticultural skills are not really valued, yet the younger generation could use these anywhere any time!'



Next steps for them are developing the growing area outside to increase output, developing other value-added products for commercial outlets and, ideally, finding a group of people to work with to develop some sort of CSA scheme..., and a long list of other things. They are optimistic, as Anne says: 'We know that this business is not going to turn us into millionaires, but we also know now that we are moving in the right direction.'

'Thanks to the programme and the mentors especially. *Making a Living from Local Food* was a really positive experience for us.'