

Hazel & Kenneth Mackenzie, **Mackenzie's Farmshop**
Cunningsburgh, Shetland Islands

Hazel and Kenneth joined Nourish Scotland's programme *Making a Living from Local Food* in February 2018. They run Shetland's only farm shop / café near Cunningsburgh, a small town about 10 miles south of Lerwick, Shetland. It is a thriving business selling local food and crafts including their own produce. They now employ four full-time and 14 part-time local staff.



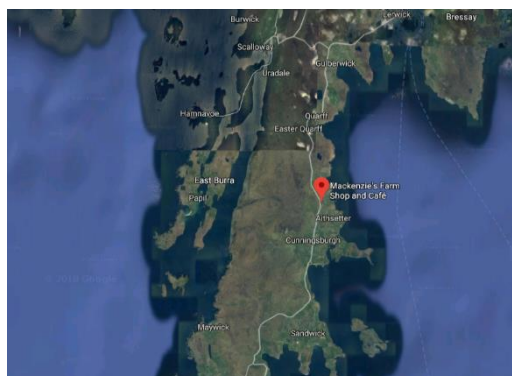
The shop/café grew from a stall with an honesty box at the main road offering their surplus eggs, only five years ago. This turned into a livestock trailer with garden produce, and building on their successes, they opened a brand new building with shop, café/ kitchen, staffroom and two retail units for let, in June 2017. They sell their own beef (a dozen steers), lamb (80 sheep), pork (a couple of pigs), eggs (50 hens), vegetables and a range of chutneys and jams, and a daughter runs a beauty salon in one of the rentals. The café is busy for breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea, now feeding a regular set of customers weekly for a meal and catching more passing trade every month. This



summer their efforts have been rewarded with **two Highland & Islands Food and Drink Awards**: the *Highly Commended for New Business Award*, and *Finalist for Independent Food & Drink Retailer of the Year*.

Making a Living from Local Food was particularly helpful to them as a place to discuss practical challenges. 'Jo [their mentor] was really good at looking at the details. We got to know him and he got to know us and so he knew what was relevant. And nobody likes homework but the homework really made us think.' Visits to the mainland for peer group and programme events turned into 'time to think, and talk things through, ... time we don't normally have.' Seeing other projects generated 'lots of fresh ideas. This really helped us grow.' This support was especially valuable since they feel quite isolated, not only because of the nature of their unique business, but also because the details could never be discussed openly within their small Shetland community. The year on the programme moved them on with developing their preserves (now producing a much wider range) and meat sales, by learning about improved packaging and labelling, and handling larger amounts safely.

Applying for funding and taking on lots of staff for the shop/café especially was a steep learning curve. You are dealing with lots of paperwork, often you don't understand why it has to be done and what is required... you get stuck, and this was also really about perseverance. A cup of tea sometimes helps, ...but in the programme you meet all these people who can help and say 'I know what you mean' and 'that's terrible'. You know that you are not on your own. We now have contacts we keep in touch with and share our problems and successes with. Just brilliant.



There is no stopping them. Plans are to 'become huge', '...by educating people about this whole local food thing...' and selling more and a wider range of local produce. First projects are to sell their sheep's wool (colouring, spinning), a larger selection of preserves, setting up online sales, and 'maybe Christmas hampers'. There is also talk of getting a hairdresser into the second rental unit, alongside the family's beauty salon. The main thing on their wish list, however, is 'to earn a proper wage for ourselves from this business.' The programme 'has really helped focus.... It was especially useful to see how in time we will get there. Not expect it all to happen overnight. But to be satisfied with taking baby steps, over a few years, just like the

other inspiring examples we have heard about.' We wish them every luck with their ambitious projects.

