

### The innovator



#### Aoife Gould

#### Region

· Isle of Skye (Scotland)

#### Sector

· Crofting – Raising Hebridean sheep for - Felt production, meat and beneficial land management.  
C. 130 Hebridean sheep run on c. 12Ha of croft land



### Features of my innovator journey

- > Took on flock in 2020 after being mentored for several years.
- > COVID lockdowns meant we had no market for our raw fleece.
- > I self-taught from online videos, making beautiful items for us and friends.
- > Left employment in 2020 to turn my hobby into a business.
- > Worked until now at a sink in my utility room, but am about to finish studio.
- > Since joining GRASS Ceiling, attended business workshops, undertaken market research (felting workshops), designed studio from work and teach felting.

### Innovation from 3 perspectives



01

#### Economic

- Turning a waste product into a valuable output.
- From c. £0.50 per kg if sold to British Wool Board, 1 felted rug can sell for £150-200.
- Processing is very low-input, but labour intensive.
- Studio has cost us a lot to build, but will facilitate paid workshops and increased efficiency.
- Selling products in local shops – gives me access to wider markets.

02

#### Environmental

- Wool is 50% carbon
- While the wool remains intact, this carbon is effectively sequestered.
- Low-input process using water and soap.
- Installed full PV solar system.
- Planned installation of wind turbine and rainwater collection system.
- Value-added products aid flock management for biodiversity and soil health.

03

#### Social

- Online groups (learning and passing on knowledge).
- Gift giving.
- New networks on Skye – other textile and wool-based businesses, sheep producers - facilitating contacts.
- GRASS Ceiling – the group of women I am part of has been the most wonderful, powerful, open, supportive and inspiring of my adult life.
- WWOOFers.
- Workshops – tourists, locals and community groups.

### Barriers

> Capital – all investment has come from ourselves.

> Childcare.

> Self belief (or lack thereof).

> Isolation – generally and specifically to creativity & business.

> Benchmarks for business 'success' do not match my goals.



“My hope for participation in the Living Lab is to find a network of amazing women, and to help future rural women access these networks by showing the impact they can have across society; encouraging policy that will enable these networks to spread and flourish.”