



World Water Day organisers and participants. Photo by the Centre for Sustainable Development.

The Rural Water Agenda at World Water Day 2026


Event Summary


Rural Water Agenda co-leads Scottish Rural Action and Newcastle University were invited to University of Strathclyde’s World Water Day 2026 to host a “**Rural Community Solutions to Water Challenges**” session as part of the official event programme.


Our peer-led workshop welcomed over 20 participants from industry, public bodies, academia, non-governmental organisations, and grassroots communities from across five continents, to share learnings on how private water and wastewater system users in rural and island Scotland can secure support and build our water resilience.


The lively discussions were anchored by four facilitators (Dr Elizabeth Lawson, Dr Laura Major, Artemis Pana, and Mia Lalanne) alongside a cohort of Scottish water and wastewater experts and community leaders, who had mobilised from as far away as Shetland to progress the Rural Water Agenda together.

Key Points from the Discussions

- 

Private Water and Wastewater Systems are not second-class to a mains connection.
Our small-scale systems are often perceived to be ‘diluting the standard’ which Scotland markets itself to hold as a Hydro Nation. We must learn from other countries whose small-scale systems are strongly valued and supported for their sociocultural and economic significance.
- 

Local people and places know best.
Top-down rules and regulations must work with, not against, local expertise and leadership. We must push policy-makers to ‘water-proof’ policies so they are place-based (e.g. regarding water catchment-specific issues) and support grassroots innovation (e.g. regarding building standards.)
- 

Systemic change is needed now.
Global water bankruptcy, climate change, pollution, antimicrobial resistance, and other issues are already impacting our communities. Decision-makers must commit to protecting Scotland’s water upstream and downstream, and provide financing and levers so we can efficiently maintain and improve our systems.
- 

Community is the way forward.
We must continue to come together and share knowledge and best practices, towards building collective bargaining power and lasting partnerships.



Artemis introducing the workshop. Photo by Scottish Rural Action.



For any queries, please contact mia@sra.scot