

Deidre Brock MP on being an apprentice

Skills of the past are skills of the future says Deidre Brock MP for Edinburgh North and Leith

Did you know it takes three years to properly train up a butcher? So I learned from apprentice Dale during a visit to J Anderson's craft butchers on Great Junction Street in Leith on Friday. I also met up with fellow apprentice Jemma who is learning about the customer service side of things in this family-run business. Both are gaining valuable qualifications, skills and on-the-job experience under the wing of owner John Henderson and his team. John tells me he is very impressed with the quality of the apprenticeships programme and the support provided to both employers and apprentices by [Skills Development Scotland](#).

There are hundreds of different apprenticeship opportunities out there for every taste and talent (have a browse at www.apprenticeships.scot). While this may not be the role for everyone, particularly for the veggies amongst us, I'm pleased to see trades such as butchery are still being learned with such care and pride – and proper support for the process from the Scottish Government.

With the real threat of cheap, poor quality hormone-pumped meat from the States flooding the market after the UK leaves the EU (and I still hope this won't happen), it's even more important we train up a new generation of young people in traditional skills that will help maintain Scotland's reputation for food and drinks, a vital industry that is set to be very badly affected by Brexit. We will need to protect our food standards and our high street craft butchers have a role to play in this – championing better welfare, high quality, properly-aged, traceable meat from local sources.

I have to say the pies were well deserving of their reputation too, absolutely delicious!

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit – many thanks to the apprentices for showing me the ropes and to John and the crew for being such welcoming hosts.

