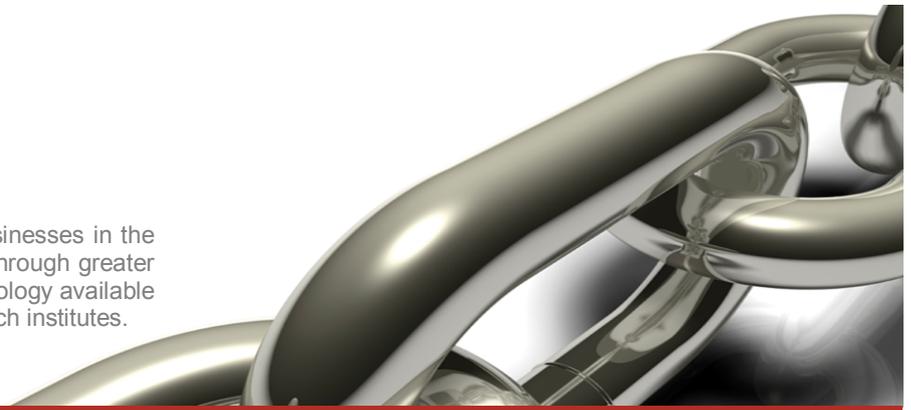




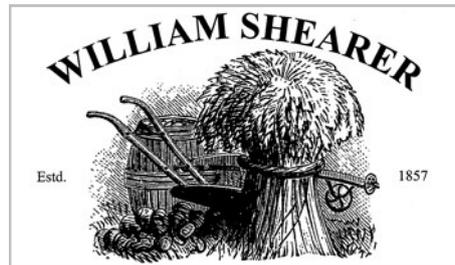
The aim of the HI Links project is to help businesses in the Highlands and Islands develop and prosper through greater access to the knowledge, expertise and technology available in Scotland's universities, colleges and research institutes.



Food and Drink

CASE STUDY

Innovation through collaboration



William Shearer and Orkney College UHI

Agronomy Institute identify cereal varieties more suited to the island climate.....

During 2010 an exciting project was undertaken by the Agronomy institute, Orkney College UHI in collaboration with William Shearer, Agricultural Seeds & General Merchants, Orkney to identify early maturing north European varieties of barley, wheat and oats potentially suitable for growing in the north of Scotland.

Winter cereal varieties survive poorly in Orkney, so growers depend on spring varieties. These are often late maturing and, in some years, can be difficult to harvest. Several countries in northern Europe have areas with a climate which is similar to Orkney's and in this region there is a much wider range of cereal varieties for a number of markets. If some of these are suitable for growing in Orkney, they could create diversification opportunities for local farmers as well as making harvesting easier.

In order to research the potential for these varieties William Shearer formed a partnership with the Agronomy Institute, UHI to take the project forward. This was further boosted by the project successfully applying for funding from Highlands and Islands Enterprise Business Innovation Grant awards (BIG), which gave the finances required to facilitate the collaboration to undertake the project.

The Agronomy Institute trials revealed varieties of barley, wheat and oats which combined earliness with both good grain and straw yields. The most promising of these will now be grown on a field scale by several Orkney farmers and the potential of oat and wheat varieties for milling and baking will be tested in Orkney.

These results suggest there may be an exciting opportunity for farmers in the North of Scotland to obtain more suitable cereal varieties than previously and to use them to develop new markets and income streams. As a result of discussing the results from the trials with its existing customer base, William Shearer has received orders for seed of the new varieties to plant more than 30 acres in 2011. If good results are obtained from this larger scale testing of the new varieties, the company expects to see a large increase in the demand for seeds of these varieties in future years.

Richard Shearer commented that:

"The successful grain trials conducted by the Agronomy Institute in 2010 have been instrumental in identifying the best North European grain varieties offering exciting possibilities for Orkney and beyond. Already the response from farmers in Orkney and Shetland has been extremely encouraging, with seed for over 300 acres of Northern varieties of barley, oats and wheat having been ordered for planting in 2011."