

Cross-Party Group on the Circular Economy

24th October 2023 – 6pm

The Scottish Parliament and online via Microsoft Teams

Present

MSPs

- Maurice Golden MSP
- Sarah Boyack MSP
- Maggie Chapman MSP
- Monica Lennon MSP
- Mark Ruskell MSP

Invited Guests

- Martin Cracknell (Principal Commercial Manager, Suez Recycling and Recovery UK – Chair of the Scottish Environmental Services Association (SESA))
- Christian Knudsen – Senior Consultant – Waste and Resources Team Ricardo plc
- Stuart Hayward-Higham (Chief Technical Development and Innovation Officer, Suez) (Presentation delivered by Martin Cracknell)

Non-MSP Group Members and Guests

- Jane Devine – FourSquare
- Angus Hamilton – Levensat
- Mary Michel – Ostero
- Stephen Freeland – Environmental Services Association
- Louise Birnie – Change Waste Recycling
- Fleur Ruckley – Topolytics
- Luisa Riascos – SAC Consulting
- Dr Toni Freitas – University of Edinburgh
- Xiaoyan Ma – Danu Robotics
- Steven Marshall – Danu Robotics
- Nick Noble – Danu Robotics
- Dr Ifeyinwa Kanu – IntelliDigest
- Alice Burrows – Ricardo
- Clare Campbell – Prickly Thistle
- Graeme Taylor – Agile Energy

- Heather McFarlane – Fidra
- Susan Evans – Resources Future
- Sarah Archer – Zero Waste Scotland
- Ronan Doyle – RMD Consulting
- Iain Macdonald
- Dr Lynn Wilson – Adam Smith Business School
- Lorna Hegenbarth – Scotch Whisky Association
- Kim Pratt – Friends of the Earth Scotland
- Frazer Hay – Uniform November Consultancy
- Charlotte Lee-Wolf – University of Edinburgh
- Andrew Murdoch – Edinburgh City Council
- Joanna Cloy - Fidra
- Martha Wood – Circular DS
- Sophie Brett – Keep Scotland Beautiful
- Dr Phoebe Cochrane - ScotLINK
- Catherine Gunby - Fidra
- Paul Smith – Office of Maurice Golden MSP

Apologies

- Michael Cook – Circular Communities
- Rob Snaith - Ricardo
- Suzanne Forup – Cycling UK
- Yvette Jelfs - Noble
- Miochelle Scott – ENA
- Bruce Reekie – WRAP
- Catherine Gemmell – Marine Conservation Society
- Michelle Scott – ENVA
- Meg Pirie – Fashion Roundtable

Agenda Item 1: Welcome

- Maurice Golden MSP opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.
- Apologies were noted.
- The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Paul Smith and seconded by Phoebe Cochrane.

Agenda Item 2: AGM

- The following new members of the group were adopted: Dr Lynn Wilson (Adam Smith Business School), Ronan Doyle (RMD Consulting), Clare

Campbell (Prickly Thistle), Fleur Ruckley (Topolytics) and Xiaoyan Ma (Danu Robotics).

- Maurice Golden provided an overview of the group's activity over the previous year with meetings covering topics, such as material impacts, textiles and marine pollution.
- It was noted there would be a meeting of the secretariat to discuss topics for future and a number of issues were discussed, including extended producer responsibility for packaging and other schemes, vapes and issues surrounding lithium batteries and the risks they pose in waste facilities. A number of those in attendance were keen to forward suggestions:
 - Mary Ostrero – circular economy education and skills
 - Monica Lennon – reuseable nappies, a joint meeting with the CPG on Construction
 - Sarak Boyack – product design and eco-design
 - Maurice Golden – the Circular Economy Bill
 - Dr Lynn Wilson – the potential formation of a textiles subgroup that can feedback to the CPG on relevant issues (it was noted by Maurice Golden that a formal sub-group would require a quorum of two attending MSPs, which may prove impractical and thus an informal sub-group might be a better option)
 - Clare Cambell – application of circular economy principles to school uniforms, UN Sustainable Development Goals in learning settings
 - Fleur Ruckley – data issues, digital waste tracking and how to measure re-use
 - Mark Ruskell – circular economy opportunities for offshore wind with the possibility of a joint meeting with the CPG on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, a Green Industrial Strategy (supported by Sarah Boyack)
 - Charlotte Lee-Wolf – data issues and the role of digital tech in enabling a circular economic transition e.g. AI and robotics; entrepreneurship and embedding circular thinking into innovation across all sectors
 - Martin Cracknell – waste in the construction sector
- There then followed the election of the group's office bearers with the results as follows:
 - **Convener** – Maurice Golden MSP – proposed by Maggie Chapman MSP, seconded by Monica Lennon MSP
 - **Co-Vice Convener** – Monica Lennon MSP – proposed by Maurice Golden MSP, seconded by Sarah Boyack MSP
 - **Co-Vice Convener** – Mark Ruskell MSP – proposed by Mark Ruskell MSP, seconded by Maurice Golden MSP
 - **Secretariat** – It was proposed that Scottish Environment LINK, Fidra, Keep Scotland Beautiful and the Marine Conservation Society continue

to act as a joint secretariat. Proposed by Maurice Golden MSP and seconded by Paul Smith.

Agenda Item 3: Presentations – Hidden Heroes: what the waste sector does and will do for NetZero

Speaker: Martin Cracknell (Principal Commercial Manager, Suez Recycling and Recovery UK – Chair of the Scottish Environmental Services Association (SESA))

- SESA includes more than twenty companies and twenty-seven of Scotland's local authorities, and the waste sector has seen an unrivalled reduction in emissions.
- An overview of Scotland's key waste statistics was provided whilst noting the overall picture was of recycling being too low, landfill use declining but incineration increasing. There had been a large increase in segregated food waste and a 1.5mt swing in waste recycling was required to reach the target of recycling 70% of all waste. Furthermore, even if the target of sending no more than 5% of waste to landfill is successful there will still be a need for landfill. It was also noted that waste levels would rise during periods of success in the construction industry given the significant impact the sector has on waste generation.
- The upcoming ban on biodegradable waste going to landfill by 2025 was identified as a key challenge with questions to be asked on how to deal with leftover material once the ban is in place. The issue of how to better engage the public on recycling must also be addressed.
- Data collection and analysis was identified as a key tool in taking measures forward and legislative drivers will impact how policy is delivered. Looking at current policy and legislation there are questions to ask on a number of areas, such as the Circular Economy Bill, waste targets and the accompanying route map and how Scotland is to make the leap to where it needs to be in terms of outcomes.
- Consistent recycling collections raise a number of issues, such as labelling and the knock-on effects of delivery of infrastructure, such as machinery and vehicles. There is strong demand for recycled materials, which can be exploited through both better design and new supply chains.
- It was noted that extended producer responsibility (EPR) and deposit return scheme (DRS) timeframes were hard to predict with a shifting policy and legislative landscape. Uncertainty is one of the key challenges at present with both the private sector and local authorities having to make decision on when to invest in infrastructure, etc. DEFRA is currently establishing a scheme administrator for the English DRS which will initially be within the public sector unlike the Scottish scheme.

- Decarbonisation of residual waste is a key priority for SESA, such as efforts at heat and power plants at Millerhill in Midlothian and exploratory work in Aberdeen and there is the potential for a fleet of facilities in Scotland. Another area of focus is organic waste and there is a question as to what powers SEPA might need given the quantities of organic waste still present in bins. Vehicle fleet decarbonisation is also a priority area with questions to be asked on the lengthy process for fleet electrification in the UK and if localised solutions should be revisited.

Speaker: Christian Knudsen – Senior Consultant – Waste and Resources Team Ricardo plc

- Ricardo work to support both local authorities and central government on waste management issues and were commissioned by SESA to produce a report on waste sector emissions in Scotland entitled: 'Quantification of greenhouse gas emissions from recycling and waste management in Scotland'.
- The methodology used in this report was consistent with previous reports to ensure valid comparisons could be drawn, and in particular the same waste streams and activates were used. The modelling used treated waste and recycling companies as a single entity with Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions included but Scope3 emissions excluded.
- A key point of note was the higher impact of anaerobic digestion facilities in Scotland with more waste being treated versus the rest of the UK.
- The full report can be read [here](#).

Speaker: Martin Cracknell for Stuart Hayward-Higham (Chief Technical Development and Innovation Officer, Suez)

Note: the intended speaker Stuart Hayward-Higham was unable to be present.

- Net Zero is not enough by itself; there is a need to also reduce consumption as much as possible to ensure we are not living beyond the resources our planet can provide.
- On emissions though, Suez must lead by example in reducing emissions and to that effect they are recorded to allow for year-on-year comparisons. But there is a need to do better in terms of material footprints and the impact of this across the supply chain. The key to that is engaging with people, and data sharing is important to educate and influence people, including inspiring younger generations.
- That influence can be used to affect positive behaviour change, such as encouraging greater use of re-use options, such as the re-use shop in Aberdeen. Suez also operates a re-use and repair hub in Aberdeen and, with economic benefits beyond simple financial value, there is a need to see more re-use options across the industry.

- Again, data is the key to driving forward such change e.g. extended producer responsibility and eco-design.
- Suez's own actions include use of 100% renewable energy and the installation of solar across its operations. They are also exploring green hydrogen options and support three live carbon capture, utilisation and storage facilities. They are also committed to tree planting and biodiversity improvements across their estate in accordance with their sustainability plan.

Agenda Item 3: Roundtable Discussion

- Sarah Boyack asked how we move from just some companies to all companies supporting the sort of initiatives that had been discussed this evening.
- Martin Cracknell said the sustainability agenda was improving and that there were companies doing the right thing regarding sustainability. He explained that this was driven by different factors, including customers forcing them to. However, he said some companies are not doing enough and it can be difficult to engage with them because their chief concern is their bottom line. Martin felt the Scottish Government should do more to promote those companies that were taking action.
- Monica Lennon asked the panel if they could expand their comments on SEPA with regard to funding and capacity.
- Martin Cracknell suggested SEPA was under pressure due to capacity issues and was being pulled in too many directions. He wondered if there needed to be a refocus with two separate models: SEPA 1.0 focused on all things regulatory and enforcement and SEPA 2.0 looking at development and infrastructure.
- Monica Lennon suggested it would be useful to hold a joint session of the Circular Economy CPG and the Construction CPG.
- Martin Cracknell raised the issue of environmental crime and highlighted how organised crime operated in the waste sector given the low risk of punishment.
- Maurice Golden agreed with the risk versus reward factor encouraging crime in the waste sector. He also pointed out that SEPA are an environmental agency and not just focused on waste and thus it was important for SEPA to highlight any issues they might be facing in fulfilling all their responsibilities.
- Kim Pratt raised the issue of carbon capture and storage for energy from waste plants and what carbon would be captured should plastics and biodegradable material be removed. Kim also asked how a just transition could be embedded into the Circular Economy Bill and if there was a gap to fill given the bill doesn't mention a just transition.
- Martin Cracknell addressed Kim's first question saying that there would always be things there that should have been captured somewhere else and conversely always things present that shouldn't be. He emphasised the need

to avoid contamination so that the quality of recycle streams would be robust enough to recycle well.

- Christian Knudsen addressed Kim's second point saying that everyone must play a part in waste management from children to the elderly. He explained how children can influence their parents and thus early years education had an important role to play.
- Martin Cracknell said it would be good to have the circular economy embedded into the curriculum and observed that it was a difficult area to engage people on. Different demographics had different reasons for this lack of engagement, such as being economically advantaged or disadvantaged enough not to feel fully connected. He went on to say that extended producer responsibility ends up being paid for by taxpayers which had an impact on the lowest paid and thus the need for a just transition.
- Ifeyinwa Kanu raised the importance of recycling, anaerobic digestion and biogenic recovery and asked how to best target more high value recovery.
- Martin Cracknell agreed with the point made and said he would be happy to discuss the issue in-depth.
- Heather McFarlane asked how much of a concern harmful chemicals in products were for the waste sector, such as persistent organic pollutants (POPs).
- Martin Cracknell said POPs were a problem and would be for some time to come in soft furnishings. He went on to say there were regulatory issues to address in how the third sector can re-use items and pointed out that incineration would impact capacity for other material and that shredding was not always practical. Martin also added that vape batteries were a problem in this space, too.
- Lynn Wilson raised concerns about consumers and the need to recognise the challenges they face in recycling and the lack of information available to them. Lynn also added there was a need for greater attention to detail in terms of research and that there was a question of how to link behaviour change with research. She posed the question of what incentives were in place to help consumers and said there was a lack of transparency in local authority expenditure on environmental initiatives, including waste.
- Martin made the point that behaviour change required a culture shift and cited Japan as an example of culture supporting behaviour patterns and creating a sense of national pride in such efforts. He suggested extended producer responsibility might influence large companies to change and launch their own takeback services if there was a cost to them of not getting their products back to recycle/re-use.
- Ronan Doyle asked about CCUS and the mineralisation of CO₂. He also asked about incentivising district heating to ensure connective pipes are in place.
- Martin Cracknell responded that industry had struggled with district heating and that there was difficulty with planning legislation and conflicts with other legislation. He pointed to the need to get planning and industry incentives to work together.

- Maurice Golden made the point that extended producer responsibility can't just be a tax on producers and that it had to encourage change, and thus a gap existed that government could fill.
- Phoebe Cochrane asked about how ESA and Suez return the value of recovered material to local economies.
- Martin Cracknell said it was difficult to ensure recycled material stayed within a local area but that there were better prospects for re-used goods & materials. He said there was a need for smarter working in terms of local re-use markets, such as furniture, clothes, etc., but that doing so could help create jobs in, for example, repair services.

The meeting was then brought to a close with Maurice Golden thanking the speakers and those attending and noting the date of the next meeting was yet to be decided but that it would take place online.