

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Tuesday 6 May 2025
16th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Evidence session – Zero Waste Scotland

Introduction

1. The Committee aims to have regular “check-ins” with the autonomous public bodies within its remit. The Committee therefore agreed to take evidence from Zero Waste Scotland, as a newly established non-departmental public body.

Background

2. Zero Waste Scotland is the public body providing expertise on the development of Scotland’s circular economy. A circular economy is a model for production and consumption that emphasises “circularity of resource use, minimising or designing out waste, and doing so in a way that addresses the twin climate and nature crises”.¹
3. The opposing concept to a circular economy is a linear model of consumption where products are bought, used, and thrown away as waste. This means more production and consumption, and more extraction of materials for manufacturing.
4. Zero Waste Scotland works with government, business, and communities “to rewire the economy from our current “take, make, waste” model to one where we make the most of the materials we have”.²
5. Zero Waste Scotland was originally established as a non-profit organisation to provide expertise on the circular economy. It was formally classified by the Office for National Statistics as a public sector organisation on 28 April 2023. The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 then made provision to apply public bodies legislation to Zero Waste Scotland (for example, bringing it within the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and making appointments regulated by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland).
6. An [Executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies Framework Agreement](#) between Zero Waste Scotland and the Scottish Ministers has been in place since 1 October 2024. This summarises how Zero Waste Scotland and the Scottish Government will work together and sets out key roles and responsibilities. It requires Zero Waste Scotland to produce: a corporate plan setting out its strategic aims, objectives and targets; an annual business plan for each financial year; and an annual report of activities and audited accounts after the end of each financial year. The first [annual plan](#), for 2025/26, has now been published, alongside a [corporate plan](#) to 2030.

¹ [SPICe Briefing - Circular Economy \(Scotland\) Bill](#)

² [Zero Waste Scotland webpage](#)

Meeting on 6 May

7. At its meeting on 6 May, the Committee will take evidence from a panel of representatives of Zero Waste Scotland:
 - Dominic Fry – Chair
 - Iain Gulland – CEO
 - Ciaran McGuigan – Director of Finance & Corporate Services
 - Jane Beasley - Director of Circular Economy Delivery
8. The session may cover any area within the responsibilities and expertise of Zero Waste Scotland but is likely to include discussion of:
 - The establishment of Zero Waste Scotland as a public body e.g. the framework agreement, associated governance, budget, and priorities in its Corporate Plan;
 - Key forthcoming deliverables under the Circular Economy and Waste Routemap, including the role of Zero Waste Scotland in relation to:
 - The forthcoming Climate Change Plan (key opportunities in relation to waste and the circular economy across sectors);
 - Progress with the Circular Economy Strategy and how it will align with the Climate Change Plan;
 - Preparedness for the forthcoming landfill ban;
 - The forthcoming waste processing infrastructure report;
 - Progress towards 2025 waste and recycling targets;
 - What work Zero Waste Scotland is doing in relation to Persistent Organic Pollutants (or other priority areas which interact with chemicals regulation);
 - How effectively circular economy policy is being progressed through post EU exit UK-wide structures (for example in the development of a Deposit Return Scheme);
 - Any significant updates related to developments in EU or other international law on waste and the circular economy.
9. Zero Waste Scotland provided a written briefing in advance of the evidence session (see Annexe).

Clerks to the Committee
May 2025



Annexe A

Briefing for NZET Committee

Ahead of Zero Waste Scotland's NZET Committee attendance on 6th May 2025 we would like to provide Committee Members with some background information that will hopefully prove useful.

Please note following key documents attached as addendums to this briefing

- Corporate Plan 24-30
- Executive NDPB Framework Agreement between Zero Waste Scotland and The Scottish Government

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Briefing for NZET Committee

Who We Are & Context

We know the biggest cause of climate change is overconsumption – where society puts too much pressure on earth's finite resources through our "take, make, waste" economic model.

Zero Waste Scotland works with government, business, and communities to rewire the economy from our current model to one where we make the most of the materials we have. This is known as a circular economy and it's the right choice if we want to create a more equal and just society for all.

Zero Waste Scotland is Scotland's circular economy public body. Since 2014, its work has helped more people understand that the answer to the climate emergency is to consume less. Through an expansive range of projects and programmes, Zero Waste Scotland's innovative work has shown that embedding circular practices is as possible as it is essential.

The facts

- **Consumption-** 80% of Scotland's carbon footprint comes from all the things we make, buy, use and ultimately throw away.
- **Clothing-** 32% of CO2 equivalent produced by Scotland's Household waste comes from textile waste.
- **Food Waste-** 50% of food we bin in our homes is wasted because we didn't use it on time.
- **Recycling-** Up to 60% of what households throw away can actually be recycled.
- **Awareness-** Only 1 in 5 people in Scotland are fully aware of the negative environmental impacts of our consumption of new products.

What we do

Through sharing this knowledge, nurturing relationships, and bold collaboration, Zero Waste Scotland is in a truly unique position to influence vital change by acting to:

- **Help people care:** advocating for change, informing why we must reduce overconsumption of natural resources and demonstrating how we can do it.

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- **Make circularity easier:** identifying and implementing the conditions required to enable circular economies to flourish across Scotland.
- **Do more where it matters most:** informing and supporting accelerated change in key sectors that require high levels of raw materials.
- **Improve infrastructure:** evidencing and demonstrating the infrastructure to keep materials in constant use.

Zero Waste Scotland is playing a pivotal role in making landmark strides towards a circular economy, including:

- Producing the first ever Scottish Material Flow Accounts (MFA), and co-authoring Scotland's first Circular Gap Report to understand the size of Scotland's material footprint and increase the transparency of our consumption challenge.
- Evidencing and supporting Government policy such as the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill and associated Circular Economy Route-map and Circular Economy Strategy, as well as National Planning Framework 4 and the Net Zero Public Body Standard.
- Delivering significant investment and support to over 300+ circular businesses through the pioneering Circular Economy Investment Fund (CEIF) and the Circular Economy Business Support (CEBS) service, both made possible in part thanks to the European Regional Development Fund.
- Forging pro-active partnerships with various Chambers of Commerce, local and regional agencies to increase reach, identify local opportunities and build capacity for change.

We can all do more to consume less. So, let's rewire the economy, for people, planet and prosperity.

Support we offer

Zero Waste Scotland provides leadership and practical support to encourage the growth of Circular Economy Practices in Scotland. Whether you're a private citizen or a business owner, a local authority employee or a community group member, we have a wide range of information and resources available.

We are currently in the process of updating the way we provide support and information to stakeholders, and this is an ongoing piece of work. Our hope is to be able to reach out to more potential partners and businesses who are looking for information and support in adopting circular economy practices.



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What is a Circular Economy

A circular economy is part of the solution to our global climate emergency, ensuring that nothing goes to waste and everything has value.

It is an all-encompassing approach to life and business which, in simple terms, can be explained as 'make, use, remake' rather than 'make, use, dispose'.

Benefits of a circular economy

1. Good for the Environment: reducing our demand for raw materials by maximising the life of products and materials.
2. An opportunity for business: Getting maximum value out of their resources will allow them to form longer-lasting relationships with customers based on providing products and services rather than just selling products.
3. Keeping down costs: Circular approaches can also reduce material inputs, resulting in cost savings and more resilient supply chains.
4. Beneficial to people: Circular models drive innovation, shorter supply chains and new, greener industries. All of these will create more opportunities for communities, skills, jobs and local economic benefit.

Transitioning to a circular economy

In the current 'linear' system, products are made, used, and disposed of. This is not good for businesses, people, or the environment. Designing out waste is the goal of a circular economy.

It's about responsible production, where businesses supplying products and services get the maximum life and value from the natural resources used to make them.

A circular economy is achieved by designing products smartly with their whole life cycle in mind, re-using and repairing to extend their useful life, and then when one phase of their life is deemed over, repairing, re-using, upgrading or remanufacturing to create new products from old.



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How does a circular economy work?

The circular economy can be as simple as being able to repair something when it is broken or leasing rather than buying. It can also be achieved by designing products smartly with their whole life cycle in mind.

Routes to embracing a circular economy include:

- **Design** - by using regenerative materials and modular design techniques, products are designed to last longer and to be more easily disassembled and repaired.
- **Reuse and repair** - manufacturers could retain ownership of their products and implement maintenance services to extend product lifecycles.
- **Recycling** - items can be easily separated into parts and materials for use in new products, displacing virgin raw materials.
- **Manufacturing** - circular economy principles are built into the design of products.
- **Remanufacturing** – repurposing or enabling other, subsequent uses of products at the end of their 'first life' to extend their lifespan.
- **Leasing and servitisation business models** - overseeing the full lifespan of products, creating a truly stable business model with a steady income.

Examples of a circular economy in Scotland

For a full list please see [Examples of a circular economy in Scotland](#)

[Argent Energy](#)

Argent Energy uses waste fats and oils to convert into high grade biodiesel used by vehicles and in heating and/or power generation.

[CCL North](#)

CCL North offers secure IT recycling and refurbishment as well as WEEE recycling. They are currently looking to set up a reuse facility for general WEEE.

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Ogilvy Spirits

Ogilvy Spirits are Scotland's first Potato Vodka producer, making vodka from potatoes not suitable for retail.

Vegware

Vegware is the only company in the UK to develop, manufacture and distribute a full range of completely compostable food packaging and catering disposables.

Zero Waste Scotland Governance and Board

Zero Waste Scotland supports the Scottish Ministers to develop and deliver their objectives and priorities for the circular economy in line with relevant policies and strategies developed under the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024, as well as the National Performance Framework and Programme for Government.

Zero Waste Scotland's core aims and objectives are set out below and in the company's Articles of Association and the organisation must take account of these priorities in its Corporate Plan. Zero Waste Scotland will

- Provide expert leadership in the identification and development of innovative solutions that help Scotland reduce its demand for virgin material consumption;
- Provide advocacy and support to citizens, communities, businesses, and the wider public landscape to undertake more circular and sustainable behaviours;
- Advise the Scottish Ministers on circular economy strategy, policy, and targets;
- Support collaboration across Scottish Government and the wider Scottish public sector to develop, adopt and embed circular economy principles, policies and targets across all strategy areas and programmes; and
- Undertake collaboration with industry and work across boundaries, including working with enterprise bodies where appropriate, to create the right conditions to deliver Scotland's transition to a circular economy.

Members of the Board of Zero Waste Scotland, including the Chair, are non-executives appointed by the Scottish Ministers in line with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Scotland. The

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Chair and Board Members are accountable to the Scottish Ministers and also to the Scottish Parliament and may be required to give evidence to Parliamentary Committees.

The Board has overall responsibility for the delivery of the functions of Zero Waste Scotland, as set above, in accordance with the aims, policies and priorities of the Scottish Ministers.

The Board has corporate responsibility, and under the leadership of the Chair, will:

- set strategic plans to deliver the functions of Zero Waste Scotland, focusing on how the work of Zero Waste Scotland can most effectively contribute to achievement of the outcomes in the National Performance Framework, the Programme for Government and Scotland's Economic Strategy in collaboration with the SG and other public bodies;
- regularly scrutinise current and projected performance against the aims, objectives and targets set out in plans and take decisions on remedial action where required;
- ensure that effective governance is established and maintained, including ensuring that decision-taking is open and transparent and, with support from the Accountable Officer and the Audit and Risk Committee, ensure that key risks are identified and managed;
- approve the annual report and accounts and ensure these are provided to the Scottish Ministers to be laid before the Scottish Parliament;
- promote the efficient, economic and effective use of resources consistent with the principles of Best Value, and regularly scrutinise financial performance and compliance with financial guidance issued by the SG;
- promote the wellbeing, learning and development of staff, provide support and challenge to the Chief Executive on staffing matters and ensure that Zero Waste Scotland meets the Responsibilities for management of Zero Waste Scotland staff described in the section below.

Role of the Board Chair

The Zero Waste Scotland Chair has additional responsibilities over and above Members of the Board, particularly in relation to strategic leadership and the conduct of Board business.

These include the following;

- lead the Board, ensuring that all Board members have suitable induction to understand the role and their responsibilities, that the skills and experience of all Board Members are used effectively and that the Board undertakes regular self-assessment of its performance;

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- ensure that the performance of each Board member is reviewed at least once per year and that the Board and/or individual Board members undertake development activity when required to ensure the effectiveness of the Board
- ensure that the Board reviews its effectiveness annually;
- ensure that a [Code of Conduct](#) (aligned to the Model Code of Conduct for Board Members) is in place, that corporate actions are taken to implement it as required and that Members of the Board understand their responsibilities, using the guidance provided by the Standards Commission
- work with the Portfolio Accountable Officer or their delegate(s) and the Public Appointments Team in the SG on succession planning for the Board, action necessary to fill vacancies as they arise, skills requirements and promoting diversity by encouraging applications from less represented groups, including younger people, people from minority ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities.

Role of the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has accountability to the Board for the overall organisation, management and staffing of Zero Waste Scotland. He must devise and implement appropriate management structures and processes and ensure the organisation has the necessary people resource for it to achieve its mission. The specific duties of the Chief Executive will be set out in a job description, and annual objectives will be agreed with the Chair and used in appraisal of the Chief Executive's performance.

In addition to any other specific duties, the Chief Executive will:

- advise the Board on the discharge of its responsibilities – as set out in this Framework Document, in relevant legislation and in any other relevant instructions and guidance issued by or on behalf of the Scottish Ministers;
- implement or oversee implementation of the decisions of the Board;
- work with the Board on preparation of the Corporate Plan, including liaising with the Senior Sponsor and/or Sponsor Team on key points which need to be addressed and the timetable for preparation and review, and work with the Board to ensure that business plans are put in place to meet the Corporate Plan aims, objectives and performance measures;

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- lead and manage the staff of Zero Waste Scotland, ensuring their wellbeing, learning and development are prioritised, and ensuring that the Responsibilities for management of Zero Waste Scotland staff set out in the section below are addressed;
- manage the budget for Zero Waste Scotland in line with Scottish Government Finance guidance, policies and procedures, including the Scottish Public Finance Manual, and advise the Board on financial implications of all Board decisions, ensuring that appropriate financial appraisal and evaluation techniques are followed (see the Appraisal and Evaluation section of the SPFM);
- agree with the Board and the Portfolio AO or Senior Sponsor what information is required to enable the Board and the SG to scrutinise the performance of Zero Waste Scotland and progress against overall strategic and business plan aims and objectives, and ensure that the agreed information is provided and that it is both accurate and timely;
- the Chief Executive's Executive Team will manage the day-to-day relationship with the Senior Sponsor and/or Sponsor Team, with other SG officials who have an interest in the work of Zero Waste Scotland and with other key stakeholders, including staff of other public bodies.
- In advising the Board, the Chief Executive will ensure that the key governance issues highlighted in the section on Governance and Risk below are addressed.

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Zero Waste Scotland Staff Attending Committee Meeting

Iain Gulland, CEO



Iain Gulland is Zero Waste Scotland's founding Chief Executive and was the Programme Director of the predecessor programme, WRAP Scotland.

Previously Iain worked with initiating recycling systems in the public, private and third sectors and led the Community Recycling Network, Scotland until 2008.

Iain has recently been appointed President of the Association of Cities and Regions for Resource Management (ACR+) and is a member of several Scottish Government Programme Boards including those covering low carbon and manufacturing.

Iain was named the 'most influential person in the UK waste and resource efficiency sector' by Resource Magazine (2014) and was granted fellowship of the Chartered Institution of Waste Management in 2016.

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Ciaran McGuigan, Director of Finance & Corporate Services



Previously Ciaran worked for over 20 years in Financial Services, with extensive experience in finance and risk management and leading finance and business change and transformation.

Ciaran is also an experienced charity non-executive Trustee and Treasurer.

Jane Beasley, Director of Circular Economy Delivery



Jane is a professionally qualified resource manager working for the past 25 years on a wide range of strategic and research projects focusing on how we can better manage and secure our resources to optimise their value and protect our environment.

Jane has a waste management focused PhD, is a Fellow of the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Before joining Zero Waste Scotland she had extensive experience of working with public and private sector organisations on a wide range of priority issues including strategy development and delivery, consumption behaviour, partnership working, sector engagement, reuse and recycling delivery services.

Jane is a regular judge of innovative practices for various national awards and an experienced Chair and Facilitator.

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Further Information

[Zero Waste Scotland website](#)

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