

Cross-Party Group on Food

January 26th 2022 6pm (Held Virtually)

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Rhoda Grant (Chair)
Jim Fairlie
Brian Whittle
Finlay Carson
Rachael Hamilton
Siobhan Brown

Invited guests

Ashley Cooke Scottish Government
Jayne Jones Argyll and Bute Council

Non-MSP Group Members

Stephanie Mander,	Scottish Food Coalition
George Burgess	Scottish Government
Tracy McCollin	Scottish Government
Mary Lawton	CPG Food Secretariat
Kirsty Ritchie	FDFS
David Thomson	FDFS
Ruth Watson	Keep Scotland the Brand
Sarah Duley	Soil Association
Margaret Gilmour	Soil Association
Lesley Stanley	Consultant
Jennifer Forsyth	Obesity Action Scotland
David Watts	Aberdeen Uni
Jules Griffin	Aberdeen Uni
Jenni Macdiarmid	Aberdeen Uni
Natasha Martins	Beezee Bodies
Beatrice Morrice	NFU Scotland
Christine Graham	Kettle Produce
Laura Wilson	FSS
David Johnston	FSS
Hazel Stead	FSS
Phoebe Williams	FSS

Gillian Purdon	FSS
Lorna Dawson	SEFARI
Liz Barron-Majerik	Lantra
Martin Meteyard	Consultant
Cate Devine	Journalist
Patrick Krause	Scottish Crofting Federation
Antonia Ineson	Myreside Organics/Organic Growers
Ceri Ritchie	SAC Consulting
Andrew Stark	RSPB
Sarah Millar	QMS
Holly Gabriel	Action on Sugar
Dea Mcleod	QMU
Helen Duggan	Seafish
Orchid Liu	UK/Chinese Times
Katrina Ross	Abertay Uni
Sara Smith	RHET
Denise Walton	Nature Friendly Farming Ntwk/ Peelham Fm
Flora Corbett	Mull Slaughter House
Wendy Wrieden	Edinburgh Community Food
Josephine Heger	SRUC
Mads Fischer-Moller	SRUC
Laura Wyness	Nutrition Research and Communication
Rachel Mirfattahi	IFST
Ylva Haglund	Zero Waste Scotland
Paul Richardson	Scottish Land and Estates
Kim Newstead	PHS
Claire Hislop	PHS
Wendy Barrie	Scottish Food Guide
Bosse Dahlgren	Consultant
Donald Reid	Slow Food
Martin Carle	CFINE
Tilly Robinson-Miles	Eatwell Agewell
Peter Brown	The List
Pat Abel	Transition Edinburgh South
Pete Ritchie	Nourish
Colin Smith	Scottish Wholesale Assn
Dan Yaxley	Scottish Food Coalition
Ewan Macdonald-Russell	Scottish Retail Consortium
Angela Mitchell	Diabetes Scotland
Sandra Williamson	REHIS

1. Apologies

These were received from Amanda Brown, Katy Clark MSP, Michelle Thomson MSP, Cat Hay, Graeme Findlay, Abi Morden Julie Hesketh-Laird, Viv Collie and Hélène Gourichon.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting (Nov 3rd 2021)

These were approved.

3. Matters Arising

The QMS report had been published and a link sent out. FSS had provided details on catering leftovers and these had been circulated.

4. Good Food Nation (Scotland) (GFN) Bill – Achieving the Vision

Rhoda Grant MSP introduced the speakers The Bill was currently in RAINE Committee where there had been an evidence session that day. Official reports and responses to their consultation were available [on line](#). The Stage I deadline was 25 March 2022

There were presentations from;

- Dr Ashley Cooke, (AC) Head of Food Policy, Scottish Government (SG)
- Stephanie Mander, (SM) Co-ordinator, Scottish Food Coalition (SFC)
- Jayne Jones,(JJ) Commercial Manager, Argyll and Bute Council

These would be sent out with the minutes.

Ashley Cooke

AC noted that the updated GFN programme of Measures would be published online soon, with the 2018 and 2019 versions already available [on line](#).

AC addressed the topic of the right to food pointing out that SG has committed to a Human Rights Bill that would be brought forward and which would include a right to adequate food as part of the overall right to an adequate standard of living.

SG was also committed to reconstituting the Ministerial Working Group on Food to look at food issues such as GFN and other key food policy initiatives such as the local food strategy.

Work was underway as per the agreement between the SG and the Scottish Green Party on the examination of a need for a new statutory body such as a Food Commission.

Stephanie Mander

SM said currently food policy was fragmented with separate strategies according to diverse policy goals. These could end up pushing up against each other or having negative consequences for other policy areas. The GFN was a framework legislation setting out structures for governance and accountability that should aid communication and organise the system as a whole. SFC welcomed the duty on the

national government as well as local government and health boards to produce the food plans as aiding this co-ordination.

SFC had concerns about;

- **Clarity of purpose** - The plans could end up being entirely focused on, for example, purely economic goals such as increasing of exporting. The right to access nutritious sustainable and safe food in a dignified and culturally appropriate manner should be at the heart of the Bill.
- **Participation** - The Bill should provide opportunities for everybody to be involved with decisions around food and to influence the rules that affect our shared food system, particularly those communities whose rights to food and health outcomes are most likely to be at risk. This could be by Citizens Assemblies.
- **Independent Statutory Body** - Currently under the proposals the Scottish Parliament (SP) would not be involved in the drafting of the plans and would not have oversight of the Local Authority or Health Board plans. This could make it very difficult to hold public bodies accountable for their commitments. An independent body could help with reviewing these plans, monitoring and reporting the impact and the effectiveness.
- **Targets** –These would help drive change and alignment with other legislation.
- **Public Food provision** –This should be exemplar and should drive change to incentivize business. At COP 26, five of the biggest retailers, Tesco Sainsbury's, Waitrose Co-op and M&S pledged to half environmental impact of the weekly food shop. The Bill should help enable businesses to achieve the GFN vision.

Jayne Jones

JJ highlighted the way Local Authorities (LAs) were preparing to deliver aspects of the GFN. It was important not to underestimate the significant role that they play in making the commitments and aspirations deliverable in Scotland. LAs were embedded in their communities and could take forward, a local, sustainable food systems approach working in partnership between public, private and 3rd sector. Therefore LAs should not be omitted from the conversation, given their wide remit in food including insecurity, waste, purchasing, climate change, education etc.

LAs had managed the consequences of EU Exit and the pandemic and therefore already had to prioritise food policy development, creating more up community initiatives and building up relationships with producers, suppliers and manufacturers.

Argyll and Bute worked with over 200 community groups during the pandemic and supported hard to reach groups, some that were previously unknown to support services all through food.

JJ thought our public sector was uniquely placed to help deliver local and sustainable food system approaches to implementing the GFN due to its sheer scale in buying power. There were 2500 schools delivering over 350,000 meals a day. Hospitals were another opportunity, with in excess of 20,000 hospital beds with over 18,000 meals served in Glasgow. Scotland also has over 1000 council run care homes.

There was a real opportunity to be spending public sector money in our communities, creating community wealth, building relationships, supporting a green recovery, creating local employment, and improving the quality of meals by offering local ethical and sustainable food. This journey has already started.

JJ pointed out that LAs would need to do more than just consult, prepare and report on a local plan. They would be instrumental in coordinating and delivering this work. The real delivery of this will happen through the development of local food policies and strategies and we needed to ensure that the funding was available. A change of mind-set was imperative. It was fine to have discussions at a national level, but it was on the ground that the real change would happen.

Open Debate

Rhoda Grant MSP stated that she had an interest with her proposed Right to Food Scotland Bill.

Wendy Barrie Good Food Guide applauded the mention of local sustainable food, but had concerns with the generic nature of GFN and there was need to look at specifics such as palm oil usage, aquaculture, the Eatwell plate and the need for more abattoirs.

Rachael Hamilton MSP asked what stopped LAs buying locally. **JJ** answered finding time and capacity to build supplier relationships and run pilots. Also cost, as it could be more to buy locally. However, there were community wealth building benefits. Lastly, overcoming the logistics and distribution barriers, of how food got from farm gates or from a supplier to the schools. There could often be creative solutions. **George Burgess SG (GB)** agreed with **JJ** as to the importance of LAs and everything they do and hoped GFN would help them deliver. The cross cutting approach meant that price was not the sole measure.

Brian Whittle MSP (BW) thought the GFN Bill should be beefed up. There were so many issues, the rural economy, low pay for workers, greenhouse gases, food waste, schools etc across so many portfolios and he thought the Bill was light on practical applications. **GB** agreed it was not a long Bill but it was important to look at the powers it provided, its breadth and holistic approach. **BW** said to implement the objectives of the GFN Bill, we need to recognize the likelihood of the cost of food rising. Also if LAs had to develop plans, we needed to understand the repercussions

of not adhering to them and also the cost of developing them. Investment would be needed.

Colin Smith Scottish Wholesale Assn welcomed JJs presentation He noted their [Delivering Growth through Wholesale](#) programme that was designed to facilitate engagement and business between local Scottish producers and wholesalers. This had been oversubscribed, with over 90 local producers wanting to attend. The first tranche had happened with more planned. SWA had the tools and the wheels, just needed the investment. **GB** noted that as well as the Wholesale programme that's funded by the SG through the recovery plan, SG also funded the Scotland Food and Drink Academy that helped prepare suppliers. It was both for supplying into the public sector and into the private sector.

CS also asked about membership of the SFC. **SM** responded that SFC was not an exclusive organization or coalition and was open to those who agreed with its core principles.

Lesley Stanley Consultant (LS) said she was a member of the Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC) from 2009 to 2015 when Food Standards Scotland (FSS) was vested, where they followed the early development of ideas for a GFN. One of the reasons that SFAC supported the establishment of FSS was because it was seen to be an opportunity to take a holistic view on food not just food safety and nutrition. **LS** asked about FSS role in GFN. **AC** replied that FSS had provided evidence to the RAINE Committee and SG had ongoing discussions with their officials. **AC** thought FSS's role would be important, particularly when consulting on food plans. There was also discussion about the role of FSS with respect to the foreseen statutory body. **SM** said they were keen to have a small new agile body as the Independent Food Commission. This could be like the Scottish Land Commission with FSS playing an important part.

Ewan Macdonald-Russell Scottish Retail Consortium (EM) noted the work that his sector had done over the last few years responding to the pandemic and other policy areas such as plastics, food waste initiatives, circular economy etc. He was in favour of an overall coherent policy but questioned whether the private sector should be brought into the GFN requirements, given the huge public policy burden brought by Covid and EU Exit. There was a lot happening and the cumulative burden of all these things was being seen in rising food prices. **EM** thought the approach should be about encouragement and creating an environment where it made sense for businesses to engage and change accordingly. **David Thomson Food and Drink Federation Scotland** agreed that additional legislation would contribute to price rises. With respect to the food plans, he emphasised the need to have a dialogue with local businesses. **Pete Ritchie Nourish** asked if **EM** could expand on the public policy burden. His understanding was that the large retailers understood the huge impact they have on people's health and the climate. **EM** said he meant the costs being faced now due to various governments' decisions, such as imports from

the EU, the Deposit Return scheme (£0.25 billion), HFSS restrictions and business rates liabilities. Regarding the environment, retailers had agreed to be net zero by 2040. Businesses were committed to that as it was the right thing to do and customers want it. Government did not need to legislate and regulation could often lead to unintended consequences. It was much better to work together on a shared Agenda and ambitions.

Siobhian Brown, MSP said she saw the challenges regarding accessing a healthy diet and the use of food banks. She noted the work of the COVID Recovery Committee and the need for resilience and healthier nation.

Jim Fairlie MSP (JF) thought it important to recognize how far the industry had come in the last 25 years. Huge strides forward had been made that we should be proud of. The GFN work should build on that.

Final points from speakers

AC

- Useful to hear and understand the range of views given by the Group.
- The GFN Bill was a whole food system approach that was a framework that provided a platform and tools to build on and enable rather than setting specific food policy targets.
- A GFN would take at least a generational change. The Bill put these plans on a legislative footing and embedded this work for the long term. It was not just for this government; it was for future governments.

SM

- Agreed with **JF** about work done but pointed out the flip side was the bad Scottish diet and food poverty.
- Agreed GFN would take time but that was why we needed to keep momentum by having an independent food body that could oversee the work and join up all the different portfolios.

JJ

- Different sectors couldn't work in isolation and local relationships were vital.
- It was important not to conflate food poverty and food waste. While one can help alleviate the other, they were very distinct and very different and should be resolved separately rather than one being a solution for the other.
- Change could happen when needed -there were now products on the market with lower fat salt and sugar that were developed to comply with School Food Regulations
- LAs', planning departments and initiatives such as commitments to making land available for growing food were other levers.

- Important not just to find quick solutions, but the right ones and to learn from our mistakes.

5. AOB

Following the CPG Food meeting on Connecting Climate Change, Natural Capital and Health on 28.1.20, **Lorna Dawson SEFARI** updated the Group on a Fellowship project "*The adoption of agroecological principles in Scottish farming and their contribution towards agricultural sustainability and resilience.*" Slides would be circulated with the minutes.

6. Date of Next meeting

The next meeting would be April 27th 2022 at 6pm. It would be confirmed whether this could be live.