

Cross-Party Group on Food

25 January 2023, 6pm, Committee Room 3 and Teams

Minute

Present

MSPs

Annie Wells (Chair)
Rhoda Grant

Non-MSP Group Members

In person

Pete Ritchie
Iain Clunie
Colin Campbell
Kirsty Tinsdale
Cat Hay
Jon Wilkin
Boon-Seang Chu
Andrew Stark
Anneli Lofstedt
Baukje de Roos
Jules Griffin
Beatrice Morrice
Colin Smith
Ian Muirhead
Scotland
Jayne Jones
Julie Hesketh-Laird
Marie-Amélie Viatte
Nicola Strachan
Scott Wilson
Simon Macdonald
Group
Tilly Robinson-Miles
Anne Marte Bergseng
Gavin Mair
Mathew Williams
Pat Abel
Donald Inch
Steven Carter

Nourish Scotland
Food and Drink Federation Scotland
James Hutton Institute
CPG Food Secretariat
Food and Drink Federation Scotland
Abertay University
Abertay University
RSPB
The Rowett Institute
The Rowett Institute
The Rowett Institute
The National Farmers Union of Scotland
The Scottish Wholesale Association
Agricultural Industries Confederation

Argyll and Bute Council
Food Standards Scotland
Connected by Nature
3x1 Group
3x1 Group
West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries

The Food Train/Eat Well Age Well
ClimateXChange
The Scottish Parliament
The Scottish Government
Transition Edinburgh South
The Scottish Government
The Scottish Government

Virtually

Orchid Liu	UK Chinese Times
Kaley Cochran	The Scottish Parliament
Liz Barron-Majerik	Lantra
Abi Mordin	Dumfries and Galloway Sustainable Food
Partnership	
Christine Graham	Kettle Produce
Gerry McBride	Skills Development Scotland
John Farley	Sutherland's of Portsoy
Paul Rooke	The British Coffee Association
Sandra Williamson	The Royal Environmental Health Institute of
Scotland	
Ann Packard	The RSA
Ceri Ritchie	SAC Consulting
Christine Fraser	Food Training Scotland
Graeme Findlay	SQA
Jennie Macdiarmid	Aberdeen University
Orchid Liu	UK Chinese Times
Ruth Watson	Keep Scotland the Brand
Sara Smith	The Royal Highland Education Trust
Bosse Dahlgren	Scottish Food Guide
Peter Faassen de Heer	The Scottish Government
Wendy Barrie	Scottish Food Guide
Kirsten Leask	Learning for Sustainability Scotland
Jess Sparks	Seafish
Lesley Stanley	Consultant
Gillian Purdon	Food Standards Scotland
Yvonne Traynor	Public Health Scotland
Wendy Wrieden	Edinburgh Community Food
Joanne Burns	Food and Drink Federation Scotland
Claire Hislop	Public Health Scotland
Daniel Yaxley	Tentamus
Kirsty Jenkins	OneKind
Alistair Williams	The National Manufacturing Institute
Scotland	
Ifeyinwa Kanu	Intelli Digest

1. Apologies

These were received from Jim Fairlie MSP, Brian Whittle MSP, Alistair Trail, Archie Gibson, David Lonsdale, David Thomson, Denise Walton, Iain Baxter, Jackie McCabe, Martin Meteyard, Ray Lorimer, Sarah Duley, Stephen Kelly.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting (21 September 2022)

The minutes of the last meeting were proposed by Tilly Robinson-Miles and seconded by Jon Wilkin and therefore approved and noted as a fair reflection of proceedings.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising noted.

4. The journey to Net Zero – where are we now?

Annie Wells (AW) apologised for the delay in starting the meeting due to parliamentary business running late. She introduced the theme and thanked the speakers for joining us.

Pete Ritchie (PR), Executive Director, Nourish Scotland

The key points from PR's presentation included:

- The food and drink sector's journey to net zero will play an important part in reducing emissions, restoring nature and improving the health of the population.
- The food and drink system in Scotland has two different sorts of emissions - reducing production emissions and reducing consumption emissions. Production emissions come from food produced in Scotland and consumption emissions relate to the food eaten in Scotland (including the food that is wasted). It is complicated to work out our full emissions as some food is brought into Scotland but not produced in Scotland whereas other food is produced in Scotland but not eaten in Scotland.
- When talking about what net zero means we think about where our production emissions are counteracted by other things (eg carbon sequestration) but we also need to consider our consumption emissions. Our consumption emissions include production emissions from pre-farmgate, fishing and aquaculture emissions, emissions embedded in feed, manufacturing emissions; as well as transport, refrigeration, retail and catering, food buying journeys, food waste disposal and packaging production and disposal.
- There are big ticket items that we can work on that will reduce emissions. This includes reducing food waste, looking at dietary change and eating low emission foods, and the decarbonisation of manufacturing.
- Decarbonisation will take some time – the type of energy we use for heating and cooling foods need to be considered.
- It is also important to look at how we improve animal health, breeding and feed additives and reducing imports of feed linked to deforestation.
- In addition, we need to think about we can lock up more carbon. This includes below ground in soils, and above ground in hedges and agroforestry in big plantations of trees. We can reduce emissions from degraded soils, particularly

from degraded peatland. There are programmes in place to do that, but they may not be going at the pace that we need them to.

- There are different scenarios on where we are going to get our future protein from. An interesting discussion can be had on how likely these are and which are more or less desirable for Scotland.

Professor Colin Campbell (CC), Chief Executive Officer, James Hutton Institute

The key points from CC's presentation included:

- The demand for food and energy is increasing by 50% and the demand for freshwater is increasing by 30%. The population is not growing by 50% or 30%, it is consumption that is growing. There is a problem with over consumption of food and many other materials.
- This is contributing to climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss.
- If we don't start to reduce consumption, pressure will be shifted onto other resources. There are more obese and overweight people in the world than there are starving people. We produce enough food to feed everybody in the planet, but it's not shared out equally. Food security is still a serious issue.
- Scotland's position in the world is very fortunate in relation to food and drink. An abundance of rain provides high potential for renewable energy and abundant freshwater – essential for growing high quality food.
- We have challenges such as an aging population, significant rural depopulation and food and societal inequalities.
- We have very little high-quality land - only 12% of the land is fit for growing high quality crops. Projections from James Hutton show that by reducing climate constraints, we potentially have more land which is more flexible for growing a wider range of crops.
- Every food is very different in its makeup and contribution to greenhouse gas emissions - all parts of the food chain need to take responsibility.
- We can reinvent our food culture in Scotland in a way that tackles and solves some of our problems such as greenhouse gas emissions and health and wellbeing.
- A sense of urgency is needed, driven by the need to adapt to the inevitable risks of climate change and the hazards that come with that while at the same time as seeing and taking big opportunities.
- Scotland has world leading science and innovation with a world leading food and drink industry using great natural assets. We need leadership to show what's actually possible and investment in the sector to accelerate the innovation and the transition to a low carbon food and drink system.

Iain Clunie (IC), Net Zero Programme Director, Food and Drink Federation (FDF) Scotland

The key points from IC's presentation included:

- FDF Scotland is hosting the Net Zero Response Programme on behalf of the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership. The team is made of IC and Programme Manager Simon McKeating.
- Setting up the programme was part of the Partnership's Net Zero Commitment which was launched at COP26. The Partnership represents a wide part of Scotland's food and drink system by working together we will be able to drive real progress.
- It has been a challenging few years for the industry with the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, the invasion of Ukraine, Brexit and the pandemic hitting hard.
- Despite that there is a real passion in the industry to move towards net zero.
- The challenge is selecting the right actions and encouraging and supporting the industry with these actions in a pragmatic way.
- It is a journey, we need to consider the steps we are going to take in a realistic time frame, what support is needed and how we measure progress.
- Net Zero is a non-negotiable and has to be delivered on. It also makes commercial sense to all businesses within the supply chain - it will drive down emissions, drive down costs and consumers expect companies to be working towards net zero.
- Conversation are being had on the carbon footprint of products between manufacturers, producers, retailers and wholesalers to work out scope 3 emissions.
- Tipping point has arrived now so Scotland has to grab the opportunities. We have world leading academics here to support the industry. It's encouraging to see positive actions already from the supply chain, we need to progress and drive forward and if not global competitors could overtake us.
- We need to make sure no businesses or people across Scotland are left behind.
- There's a real grownup debate to be on what this will mean for Scotland as a nation and for our people.
- The Net Zero Programme is working on a number of projects including reducing the emissions and improving efficiency of refrigeration in the seafood sector. The programme has brought together four bakers – who are facing similar challenges around reducing emissions through cooking, cooling, transportation and often being based in rural locations. These projects will provide learnings for the wider food and drink industry.
- Evidence based, good quality data decision making is vital but the industry is data poor. The programme is therefore undertaking a mapping exercise of Scotland's food and drink system's emissions.
- This work will help understand what support is needed from the Scottish Government and others and what barriers are preventing progress.

- There's a lot of work happening, the programme is aiming to bring that together and avoid duplication. It is vital we all work together to accelerate change, if we don't do that Scotland's food system won't become net zero.

Open debate

The following was noted within the open debate:

- AW thought it was good to have an update on the positive work that is happening and to see organisations from across the supply chain working together. She noted a particular interest in the project with the bakers, with there being so many bakeries in communities across Scotland she thought it was helpful to share best practice.
- Simon Macdonald (West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group) noted the importance of collaboration and working with academia and using the most up-to-date data and science.
- Beatrice Morrice (BM) (The National Farmers Union of Scotland) noted that Scotland's farmers and producers have such high standards and that there is a need for the retailers to support the industry on its journey to net zero.
- IC noted that the retailers have a vital role to play as an important part of the food system and that the programme was in discussions with Scottish Retail Consortium to highlight our approach and how we can work together. He thought that we need to tell our story coherently as a nation on the importance of buying Scottish products – he thought we have done a good job of that but that we can do more through a new lens on net zero and sustainability.
- BM thought some of her members are keen that retailers display where products are from more clearly and fairly or it could lead to more products being imported into Scotland.
- Cat Hay (FDF Scotland) asked the speakers what is distracting our industry on accelerating to net zero.
- CC said the Ukraine war and the pandemic and threats to livelihoods have distracted us from the inevitable fact that there is an existential threat from climate change in the long term. He thought the longer we delay, the worse it's going to get. He felt it was best to try to focus on the positives around the opportunity of a better world, an opportunity of better food and drink and an opportunity for a better environment.
- PR thought transition to a net zero food and drink industry hasn't had the same degree of political attention as other industries – for example the oil and gas sector. He felt the food system has a much more complicated transition to reach net zero. We have to deliver for the climate, for nature, for rural Scotland, for health, and our journey involves what we put in our mouths every day.
- PR didn't believe Scotland has the resources and investment needed if we are going to make success of this.
- PR noted that there has to be a shared responsibility and efforts from the farmers, to the manufacturers, to the finance sector, to the retailers and the catering industry. He felt we need to make sure the risk is not placed onto the

SME's and the most vulnerable businesses which could be negative for Scotland, for people's health well-being, and for locally economies.

- Jon Wilkin (Abertay University) highlighted that the majority of food and drink businesses in Scotland are small to medium sized enterprises and are often family run. He asked how we ensure that the people running these businesses have the time and resources to play their part and that more resource was needed to support the programme's efforts.
- IC said despite the challenges we need to turn reaching net zero into the day job of all businesses and the responsibility is on everyone to support them. He noted that we have support available already through the programme, academia, enterprise agencies, NGOs and local councils but that more support and funding would be welcome. IC said it was important through the mapping work to find out what support already exists and where there are gaps.
- Baukje de Roos (the Rowett Institute) thought that foods that are healthier or more environmentally sustainable could often be more expensive which can mean consumers have some difficult decisions. She wondered how we respond to that and what is the role for the retailers.
- IC felt that retailers are responding to the needs of their customers – if a product sells it will continue to be restocked and if it doesn't sell then it gets delisted or reduced. The challenge is shoppers are being more conscious and aware of net zero sustainable products but that at the moment is perhaps not tuning into sales.
- IC noted that if the products retailers are selling are not on their way to achieving net zero they will lose commercial advantage with their competitors. This means they will be focusing on the emissions that come from the products they sell.
- PR noted that fresh fruit and vegetables is one of the categories where there's a big gap between what producers get and what shoppers pay. As fresh fruit and vegetables are one of the easiest foods to get from the farm to the plate perhaps offers an opportunity to disintermediate the supply chain.
- Jules Griffin (the Rowett Institute) noted that increasing vegetables and fresh fruit consumption is beneficial for health longer term which would keep people out of hospital, in their homes and fit and healthy for longer which would then pay for itself.
- Andrew Stark (RSPB) noted that he would be really interested to understand what a nature positive food system could look like in Scotland and the interactions between biodiversity.
- CC said Scotland's agricultural vision is looking at how we move towards a much more nature positive farming system and by being nature positive, we are making our systems more resilient to the inevitable change that we are facing. He thought one of the simplest things we can do is to increase the organic matter of our soils. This helps hold more water which would help in drought years.
- He went on to say that consumers may pay more for high nature value farming products meaning framers could benefit financially.

- Ruth Watson (Keep Scotland the Brand) highlighted that there is a need for farmers to get a better return on their produce. She felt there was a threat of many leaving the industry who won't be making the vital food and drink that we need. She asked the panel how community supported agriculture or similar could support with the way in which we get food from the farm to the fork.
- PR thought this was a part of a social change that's happening globally and in Scotland with consumers making their own choices. He thought there were challenges around the ways supply chains are set up and that community supported agriculture have been made difficult by distribution routes, by logistics and by the scale they produce. He noted the importance of reconnecting people with the farms and community growing around them and in supporting and incentivising local food.
- CC noted that there is a livelihood crisis in the rural sector and particularly in farming with many farmers not making a great profit and actually not in the business to make a profit either. He thought they deserve a just transition as well and that for some farmers diversifying into non-food products like trees and wood could be sensible.
- Ifeyinwa Kanu (Intelli Digest) asked how we are going to enable and empower young people to get involved and take a lead in the future.
- CC noted that getting younger people involved is vital and there are new entrants coming into farming from very different backgrounds with new ideas but maybe not enough. In addition, he noted a shortage of women in agriculture. He thought that when starting to redesign systems and looking at different ways of doing things we need to consider how that fits with getting more women and young people into the industry. This could involve new technology and ways of working – he highlighted indoor vertical farming as a particular area he had seen young people interested in.
- Ian Muirhead (Agricultural Industries Confederation Scotland) asked if Scottish farmers, growers and seed and plant breeders should have access to gene editing technology to help deal with climate change and for future resilience. In addition, he thought we need to ensure that livestock is talked about as an important part of a circular economy.
- CC thought livestock systems come under a lot of scrutiny because of the high greenhouse gas emissions but that there are many things we can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from livestock systems. Farmers would then get a higher price for higher welfare.
- CC thought we should have access to gene editing and felt it was a very promising technology. He considered that it needs to be used for the right reasons and for public good such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- PR felt that that current Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill that's going through the UK Parliament is a poor bill.
- Colin Smith (CS) (the Scottish Wholesale Association) noted the Scottish Wholesale Association is working very closely with the Net Zero Programme. The organisation has completed the first phase of a project looking at fleet decarbonisation and will be sharing the learnings. He explained that a big challenge for his sector was around reducing road miles. There have been trials

with electrical vehicles but financing is difficult in particular for SMEs. He wondered where the Scottish National Investment Bank fits in terms of SMEs moving towards net zero.

- CS highlighted the financial pressures on business due to Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis coupled with forthcoming legislation that could potentially have a massive impact on the Scottish drink industry - including the Deposit Return Scheme and the consultation on alcohol advertising and marketing restrictions. He felt financial pressures are putting in place barriers and hurdles that are making the journey to net zero challenging.
- AW and CS discussed the challenges with low emission zones in Glasgow with a lack of vehicles available.
- Simon Macdonald (West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group) thought when moving towards net zero we need to consider the impact on being able to produce food - such as increasing the amount of offshore wind power potentially reducing the fishing fleet.

5. AOB

AW introduced Tilly Robinson-Miles from the Food Train. Tilly made the group aware that the Glasgow branch has had news that they will not receive funding post March 2023. They are calling on Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership to work with Food Train to secure the money needed to keep the service going. She asked the group to help in any way they can to support the campaign against the closure.

Post meeting note: Despite all the efforts to date, it unfortunately seems the closure of the Food Train Glasgow branch is now looking likely. You can hear Food Train Chief Executive – Michelle Carruthers on [Good Morning Scotland](#) on 02/03/2023 discussing the impact of this decision at about 1:06.

AW advised that Kirsty Tinsdale will be using MailChimp going forward to communicate with non-MSP members of the group. This is GDPR compliant and will make it easier for people to register and unsubscribe from the group. Members of the group will receive instructions on how to sign up for this list soon.

AW also asked members of the group to send any ideas for future meetings over to Kirsty by email.

Marie-Amélie Viatte (Connected by Nature) suggested a future focus on community food growing and urban farming.

6. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 17 May 2023 at 6pm in Committee Room 5 of the Scottish Parliament. There will also be an option to join online via Teams.