

Cross-Party Group on Wellbeing Economy

20th of September 2023, 6:30-8:00 pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Maggie Chapman MSP, Emma Harper MSP

Invited guests

Ann Pettifor, Anna Beswick, Amy Baker, Andre Prasetyo, Anna Philbrick, Becky Ford, Ben Twist, Kaley Cochran, David Petri, Emily Milner-Smith, Fabio Villani, Fiona MacDonald, Iona Brown, John Todd, Marielle Bruce, Samantha Kagan, Per Arno, Ian Gulland, Mark Horler, Shumela Ahmed, Michael Weatherhead, Margaret Douglas, Thalia Kehoe Rowden, Xabier Villares Naveira,

Non-MSP Group Members

Josh Doble (Community Land Scotland), Iain Black, Gerry McCartney, Gemma Campbell (Scottish Land Commission), Emma Sedgewick (Rural Communications), Amy Baker (Carnegie UK), Marielle Bruce (YouthLink Scotland), Sophie Brett (Keep Scotland Beautiful), Ronan Taylor (Biospheric Restoration Systems), Tom Sneddon (DTAS), Aileen McLeod (WEAll Scotland), Lukas Bunse (WEAll Scotland), Alex Turner (WEAll Scotland), Isla Byrne (WEAll Scotland), Hedda Roberts (WEAll Scotland), Aileas Macdonald (WEAll Scotland), Patrick Wiggins (WEAll Scotland)

Apologies

Michelle Thomson MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Maurice Golden MSP, Sarah Deas, Martin Avila, Lyn Jardine, Euan Murray, Iffat Shanaz, Keith Bell

1 Welcome and CPG Business

Welcome from Maggie Chapman MSP and Emma Harper MSPs, co-convenors of the Cross Party Group on Wellbeing Economy.

Maggie Chapman MSP introduced the AGM's business segment for the first meeting of the cross-party group for the new year.

Appointment of office bearers

Maggie Chapman MSP Proposed Emma Harper MSP as co convenor; Emma Harper MSP proposed Maggie Chapman MSP as co convenor. Both seconded by Josh Doble.

Appointment of Secretariat

Lukas Bunse agreed to continue to provide support on behalf of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland. Maggie Chapman MSP proposed WEAll Scotland to provide the secretariat and Emma Harper MSP seconded.

Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous meeting were circulated by Lukas before the meeting. Shumela Ahmed asked for the meeting minutes to be amended to note her presence, which Lukas agreed to do. The draft minutes were approved without further amendments.

2 Introductory presentations by Panellists

Maggie Chapman introduces the panelists and makes reference to the day's news of PM Rishi Sunaks announcement to push back the deadline for phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles to 2035.

Anna Beswick

Anna is the Head of Climate Ready Leadership at Sniffer. She specialises in climate resilience and manages the Adaptation Scotland programme which supports organisations, businesses and communities to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Anna introduced herself and her role at Sniffer. She emphasised the importance of climate resilience and adaptation, highlighting the challenges Scotland faces due to climate change and the need for early action. She references fish farmers and BnB owners in the highlands who face increased adversity in Scotland's economy and need more support. She highlights that preventative action needs to be taken more seriously to enable businesses to respond proactively to an uncertain future. At the moment, "planning doesn't address this". Facing an insecure future, key policy leads must take the opportunity we have now to embed solutions, such as in food resilience, community welfare, agriculture. This also includes reviewing our current built environment.

She discussed the importance of involving local communities in adaptation planning. "Climate resilience is a public health challenge" and disproportionality affects people like tenants, those on zero hr contracts, elderly and the young. Anna highlights that one of the root causes of this is the inequality in power sharing, for example most legislation is exclusively by politicians and academics and does not draw enough on local community knowledge. She believes that meaningful empowering of

communities is needed to address the power imbalance and ultimately the climate emergency but warns that this should not become an undue burden on the vulnerable.

Anna concluded by discussing the funding and finance challenges for climate adaptation. The ability of our economy to adapt is currently underfunded and overlooked. £10bn is needed to address climate change effectively but there are huge barriers to this funding. She lists the reasons for this, saying the private investment is more difficult to attract and highlights that there is limited options and expertise in the field.

Ann Pettifor

Ann Pettifor is an economist and Director of Policy Research in Macroeconomics (PRIME) and currently sits on the Scottish Just Transition Commission. In 2008 she jointly co-authored the original The Green New Deal (New Economics Foundation) and has subsequently published books on The Case for the Green New Deal (Verso, 2019) and The Production of Money (Verso, 2017). In 2020 she accepted an invitation to chair the board of directors of A-Deus, an innovative, community-based clean energy company, based in Edinburgh.

Ann emphasised the importance of policy autonomy for governments to transform economies. She shared her experience from a visit to the Isle of Lewis and the challenges faced by local communities. Ann referenced her experience on the Isle of Lewis where there is local resentment to the building of windfarms, because locals are only receiving limited benefits of the energy production in their back garden. This is becoming a common problem and is due to energy being traded as a global commodity and thus beyond national government or community control. Renewable energy is relatively cheap to produce, but communities who are hosting renewable generation are still charged dearly.

She concluded by emphasising the need to change the current system to restore wellbeing and address the climate crisis. Globalised markets are stopping change in our economy and our ability to tackle the climate emergency. “Politicians are impotent” at the moment and cannot hold the global markets to account as these often operate “above democracy”. This means that we require a different global economy to meet our goal. To demonstrate that this is not a new challenge, Ann also referenced the example of Samuel Plimsoll and argues that we need to restore ‘Plimsoll line’ of the global economy.

Aileen McLeod

Aileen is the Interim Director at the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland. Aileen has spent many years in public policy advocating for and advising on the Wellbeing Economy agenda both in Scotland and at the EU and international level. She has

served in the Scottish Government as a Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; in the Scottish Parliament as MSP for South Scotland; and in the European Parliament as an MEP representing Scotland.

Aileen expressed gratitude for being back in the Parliament and acknowledged her new role as the Interim Director of Scotland. She paid tribute to the previous director, Jimmy Paul, for his leadership and contribution to the wellbeing economy movement in Scotland.

Aileen noted the importance of the wellbeing economy and the need for a transition to it, especially in light of the current climate crisis. She highlighted the urgency of addressing the climate crisis, especially with the upcoming UN Climate Action summit, the UK Government's scaling back of net zero policies and the First Minister's upcoming climate summit. However, she criticised that despite these events the world is not on track and has now, according to scientists, passed its safe operating limits, leading to increasing humanitarian crises. She argued that this is the result of the way our economic model operates. We need to transform imminently to a regenerative economy that will the wellbeing of people and environment rather than singularly focus on maximising GDP.

Aileen referred to WEALL Scotland's four key design principles for the wellbeing economy:

- prioritising wellbeing and equity and measuring societal progress using more meaningful measures than GDP
- supporting upstream policy interventions that focus on prioritising people's fundamental needs
- embracing the potential of redistribution to generate a fairer distribution of income, wealth, power, and resources
- empowering people and communities

Aileen recognised the importance of the Scottish Parliament in leading the transition to a wellbeing economy, but that it is currently not fulfilling its role to hold the government to account against its Wellbeing Economy promises. She argued that we need to have an open and honest discussion on the fight against climate change and the need for redesigning the economy and that Scotland is and should remain at the forefront of this.

3 Audience Questions

Maggie Chapman MSP: Referring to concerns about the current globalised system, particularly in areas like energy markets and food production, which has led to a loss of democratic control and accountability, MC asked about the possibility of moving beyond the traditional energy grid, which would allow for a degree of detachment from the global energy market. Maggie asks about the conversations and discussions that were held with people on Lewis (and possibly the wider Just

Transition Commission) regarding these ideas and whether there were any considerations about infrastructure constraints and the potential to think beyond the current grid structure.

- Ann Pettifor shared that during discussions in Lewis, there was a palpable sense of resentment among the residents due to feeling disempowered. The residents were burdened with high energy bills and lacked the necessary resources or government support to address them. The immediate concerns in Lewis were more about the day-to-day cost of living rather than broader systemic issues. However, in a wider European context, there is an ongoing debate about the energy market's design. Ann cited Spain as an example, where despite having the capability to generate almost free energy through solar power, the country is still constrained by global gas prices. This situation has led the Spanish government to approach the European Commission to consider redesigning the energy market, as the current design penalises countries that can produce energy at minimal costs. Ann proposed that Scotland, with its potential for wind energy, could provide energy locally and affordably. However, to achieve this, there's a need to redesign the energy market, which would necessitate international coordination.
- Emma Harper highlighted that people in certain areas, like Lewis and Stranraer, are strongly opposed to wind farms. She shared an example of a wind farm proposal in Stranraer, where the local community could benefit financially even before the turbines are installed, but they remain opposed. She mentioned her visit to Jersey, where residents pay significantly less for electricity than in Scotland but still find it expensive. However, due to the effects of the Ukraine war, Jersey is reconsidering its stance on securing its electricity supply. Emma asked: "How do we engage people who resent windfarms?".
- Aileen McLeod recalled challenges faced during her tenure as MSP particularly with opposition to onshore and offshore wind farms. She stressed that communication is crucial. Engaging all stakeholders, including the community and energy companies, from the outset can help address concerns, in particular those who will benefit from wind farm developments and how those benefits can be reinvested into the community. Aileen advocated for finding compromises to ensure communities reap the benefits of wind farms.

Maggie Chapman MSP: how to get communities on board and engage them in discussions about climate change and the wellbeing economy?

- Anna Beswick emphasised the importance of mediation skills in addressing conflicts related to climate change and the wellbeing economy. Anna expressed her belief that professionals in the climate and environment sector need to be equipped with skills to handle and manage conflict effectively

which will help in addressing the barriers and challenges faced in the climate transition. She highlighted a mediation training programme at St. Andrews University that was attended by a cohort of climate professionals from diverse backgrounds. While mediation is not a complete solution, Anna emphasised the importance of addressing conflict in the best possible way and believes there's more that can be done in this area.

- Ann Pettifor showcased a broader perspective, noting that while mediation skills are valuable, there's a deep-rooted belief among people that the system is inherently biased against them. They are aware that their wages have stagnated for decades, and that the benefits of investments, like in wind energy, often go to foreign entities. This existing resentment is exacerbated when the climate change debate is introduced, as it's perceived as another burden without clear benefits for them. Ann highlighted the pervasive economic insecurity people feel, worsened by the current cost of living and energy crises. This insecurity and resentment are driving people towards far-right ideologies and strongmen leaders who promise protection against market forces. Ann argued that mediation alone cannot address this deep-seated resentment. The real solution lies in restructuring the economy to ensure fairness, security, and wellbeing for all.
- Aileen McLeod supports the idea of increasing public ownership over the energy system, as endorsed by the Just Transition Commission. She referenced the Just Transition Partnership's emphasis on this approach. Aileen cited examples of municipal renewable energy schemes in North Ayrshire and community-owned energy initiatives in North Uist and suggested that there might be a need to further explore and invest in public ownership of the energy system.

Shumela Ahmed, Resilience Learning Partnership: What actions are being taken in the area of upskilling and training, particularly in supporting not just young people but also adults who could benefit from retraining or accessing development for the first time?

- Anna Beswick acknowledged the value of the work Shumela is doing and expressed interest in learning more about it. Anna highlighted that there's a significant gap in integrating local knowledge and lived experiences, emphasising the importance of locally-led projects that are deeply rooted within communities and have a genuine understanding of local culture and values. Regarding training, Anna agreed that current efforts are insufficient. While universities provide valuable research on climate risk, there's limited funding to delve into local knowledge and lived experiences. She stressed there's a need for democratic innovation to develop richer approaches to harnessing this local knowledge.

- Aileen McLeod highlighted the Love Letham project in Perth, which focuses on community wellbeing. This project is a collaboration with Perth and Kinross Council, the local health board, and the community, focusing on engaging with various age groups, from young children to teenagers and families, to address the real challenges they face. Aileen advised that the outcomes will be valuable and is keen to share them with the parliament and other stakeholders. In response to the question about training and upskilling, Aileen agreed that more needs to be done, especially in areas like retrofitting. She sees potential for local communities to benefit by collaborating with local colleges to upskill and retrain the workforce, ensuring the creation of quality jobs. Aileen also mentioned the opportunities in building a circular economy, particularly in the repair and reuse sector, where further skills development could be beneficial.

Iain Black, Professor of sustainable consumption at University of Strathclyde:

Despite numerous wellbeing policies, emissions are rising and poverty isn't decreasing proportionally to the funds being spent, suggesting there's a gap between policy and actual impact. Challenging the belief that GDP growth is the solution to poverty and the climate crisis, how can one convince Labour and SNP MSPs to recognise that the very cause of these issues cannot be their cure?

- Emma Harper MSP drew on her nursing background to highlight the challenges of working towards election cycles rather than focusing on long-term projects. Emma highlighted the importance of cross party collaboration and continuous learning, and confirmed that she will continue to engage with her colleagues to promote understanding and find solutions.
- Maggie Chapman MSP added to Emma's comments by urging constituents to contact MSPs to urge them to collaborate on these issues.

Iain Gulland, Zero Waste Scotland, founding Chief Executive: How do we change the dynamic and get the power to develop local social wellbeing? The Circular Economy Bill presents exactly this opportunity.

- Iain Gulland highlighted the potential of the circular economy and the opportunities it presents for local communities, particularly in the context of waste and recycling. He noted that while there are global frameworks for energy, there isn't one for waste and materials. He sees this as an opportunity for Scotland to create its own market with opportunities for communities, rather than treating waste as a liability. Iain highlighted the potential benefits for island communities, both in terms of social advantages and economic opportunities, of creating a different market, especially at the local and regional levels. Iain urged everyone to support and engage with the bill as it

presents an immediate opportunity to be more creative in our approach to waste and recycling, ultimately contributing to the wellbeing economy.

4 Closing remarks

- **Ann Pettifor** recognised the value of employment in terms of tax revenue, and emphasised the need for a transformation of the economy. She stressed the importance of upskilling and reskilling the workforce, as well as the vision to see it and the courage to implement it.
- **Anna Beswick** referred to the potential of social infrastructure in a wellbeing economy, emphasising the need for whole society change, addressing barriers, and enhancing communication and engagement methods. She expressed her inspiration from the discussions and questions raised during the meeting.
- **Aileen McLeod** revisited her initial remarks, highlighting the role of the Parliament in scrutinising legislative instruments, such as the draft budget, in alignment with the wellbeing economy. She stressed the importance of the Parliament in holding the Scottish Government accountable and pushing for bolder ambitions. Aileen also proposed the idea of a citizen's assembly focused on the wellbeing economy agenda and suggested that the Scottish Parliament engage with other wellbeing economy countries to discuss accountability and leadership.
- **Lukas Bunse** briefly discussed the need to engage more MSPs in the work and the challenge of translating discussions into impactful actions, emphasising the importance of collaboration and effective use of the group's collective skills and knowledge.
- **Maggie Chapman MSP** acknowledged comments from the chat about the significance of community voices and the need for economic democracy. She mentioned an upcoming session on democratising the economy and highlighted the importance of community development. She informed attendees about Tuesday's Scottish Government Debate: Climate Emergency: Ambition and Action. She also highlighted the need for discussions on adaptation finance and suggested collaboration with other cross-party groups to avoid working in silos.

Maggie Chapman concluded the meeting with gratitude expressed to Ann Pettifer, Anna Beswick, and Aileen McLeod for their contributions.

The next cross-party group meeting was announced to be on December 8th, 10:30 am -12:00 noon, trialling a new online-only format.

5 Actions

1. Lukas Bunse highlighted the need to engage more MSPs in the work of the group.
2. Maggie Chapman MSP suggested collaboration with other cross-party groups to avoid working in silos.
3. Lukas sought feedback on how we can use the skills and knowledge to go beyond the discussions in the room.

These minutes were prepared staff and volunteers of WEAll Scotland, Alex Turner, Isla Byrne and Lukas Bunse. For any proposed amendments please contact lukas@scotland.weall.org.