**Note of the LINK Economics Group meeting, held 20 March 2018.**

**Attending:** Matthew Crighton (FoES), Denis Mollison (HWDT), Jenni Hume (APRS), Calum Duncan (MCS), Bruce Wilson (SWT) Calum Duncan (MCS), Alexa Morrison (RSPB), Phoebe Cochrane (incoming SEO), Alice Walsh (staff).

**1. Welcome and Apologies:** Ric Lander (FoES), James Curran (Fellow), David Downie (WWFS) and Catherine Gemmell (MCS) and Daphne Vlastari sent apologies. Matthew welcomed everyone, and in particular Phoebe, the new Sustainable Economics Officer.

**2. Project: A circular economy for a fairer footprint.**

Sustainable Economics Officer: The panel (Matthew, Bruce, Jenni, Jen) interviewed 4 candidates, Phoebe was appointed and would begin on 30 April. We will be seeking to learn from current CE practitioners for the next 6 months. Phoebe will be working in the APRS end of the Dolphin House office, on 3 days spread over 4, not Fridays. Her email will be phoebe@scotlink.org

Intelligence on the CE bill and initiatives: In a meeting Phoebe attended with Scottish Govt on climate technical matters, it was mentioned, but no-one had anything concrete. Jenni mentioned it in a meeting with Colin MacBean, Govt head of Zero Waste Scotland, who said it’s a blank sheet. The next Programme for Government is where we would expect to see it. So far, it is clear there is not much content. There are other initiatives to note at Govt level. The proposed ban on plastic cotton buds and plastic straws. On plastic microbeads, a UK ban on manufacture is coming, though there is no microbead manufacture in Scotland. Legally this comes in end of June, when the ban on sale in a limited range of products goes into place. Legislation for a ban on microbeads will come in Scotland. The consultation on cotton buds and straws will come. The Expert Panel as announced in the last Programme for Govt, will look at all single use items.

UK Treasury consultation on measures to deal with [plastics](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-the-plastic-problem), 18 May deadline. It was agreed we should respond to this and other initiatives while in the scoping stage of our project, and have agreed lines to counter the anticipated business opposition.

Incinerators are coming onstream, should be on our list of interests. They have 25-year contracts. Housing materials are also an issue.

Packager Responsibility Notes, an audit was announced at Westminster. This is run by the industry who make a profit out of it. It is very complicated, and currently leads to inflated figures for recycling.

Also included are initiatives at the EU level, and the impacts of Brexit.

Priorities for SEO for Year 1. Quite a lot of scoping out and researching, and keeping up with developments on relevant issues. We would consider Milestones for the Funder at the same time. We have two scenarios, Plan B in absence of anything coming on the Bill.

We should contact the key civil servants about who is leading on it and if there is any appetite within Government for it. We know that Roseanna Cunningham is very supportive of CE measures. The issue of ownership with Govt replicates issues around Just Transition: if it is with Environment and Climate and not Economics, it will have less charge. Equally, the CE appears in the Economics strategy.

We should speak to the relevant government agencies, Zero Waste Scotland and SEPA, it relates to One planet prosperity. Our SNH contact Tom McKenna was interested, though unsure where SNH can contribute on this agenda. Scottish Enterprise and HIE. One of their reps is involved in the Deposit Return stakeholder group.

Expert advisory group. Agreed this should be established. An early task is to **prepare the remit** for it. We want to include any people who can help. Jenni suggested an international expert on deposit return well versed in EU systems, based in Barcelona (Clarissa). **Jenni** to provide contact details.

We want to involved businesses on it, difficult to have any one person representing the sector. Suggestions included the Scottish Forum for Natural Capital, someone from John Lewis, or Marks and Spencer as those with good sourcing policies. **Bruce** has a few contacts.

What we can do within LINK? We have our CE report. The initial mapping carried out at the start of the Flourishing project was a useful exercise. Phoebe will write to all members and canvass ideas, see what they can bring to the project. We will need to focus on a few areas. This can be done in the first few months.

We will also undertake a mapping process with externals (the Brainstorming event in the application) for further interest and expertise. Timing for Autumn. And then working for an increase in public pressure. This needs to be timed well for maximum impact Thinking of timeline for Deposit Return, which stemmed from the 2009 Climate Act, when we will be celebrating that, to nudge them on to the next thing. On its timeline, there are meetings being held now with stakeholder groups, to be finished in April. The options will be put to the advisory summit, then for public consultation to choose an option. This matters to the First Minister.

Programme for Government and the CE Bill: can we be geared up for articulating any pressure in advance of it? Zero Waste Scotland have some thoughts, though these are not public.

Aim is for overall reduction in resource use. We need to do two things, to make significant steps on misuse of resources, and to get the public onside, to engage them and do it in a way that connects these two things. There is a distinction between what really makes an impact environmentally, and what engages people.

RSPB put in some PQs on horticultural peat levels, the answer being that we cannot do anything for lack of powers. We need to challenge Govt to say what it is they can do.

Can legislation anticipate powers coming from Brexit? It is a habit of this Govt to set targets for things they have no means to achieve. There is a fine line between looking silly and doing what you can to put pressure on others. Our focus should be mostly on things we can do, within a framework of things Scotland cannot do alone.

An early priority is working out whether we should be putting pressure for a bill in the Programme which we need to resolve soon. When talking to members and others, put it in terms of what this bill can usefully do.

CE alliance: Who are our allies? Some may be participants in Scottish Forum for Natural Capital. *Have you got the Bottle* sought support from organisations from all areas, brewers, retailers, and created media around that. Sporting bodies, churches. Really diverse. Some easy wins. Alliance members might depend on the approach we take. Academic allies will be useful, and there is quite a lot of business interest around it, that you can still increase growth within it, there would be support across sectors. There will be people interested in it in the round, then more niche stakeholders.

We can draw out some priorities for the next 6 months once Phoebe starts. **Matthew** will amend the draft milestones in light of this discussion.

Ellen McCarthur Foundation is potentially a very strong ally. Is a priority. **Jenni** will check for contacts.

**3. Updates and next steps on:**

Mins of the last meeting: Actions were covered in this meeting.

National Performance Framework: The revised framework was expected by end March, it has been delayed by the Continuity Bill. We are unhappy there is no revision of the purpose statement. We plan a joint response with Oxfam and SCVO. The outcomes have been revised. Daphne is keeping an eye. In the meeting with SNH we heard the natural capital asset index is close to completion. This does not include marine, the Atlas is a good proxy for the asset index. Tom McKenna of SNH is keen to give this group an update on the NC index.

Scottish National Investment Bank: A report came out at end of February on which FoES commented. Essentially FoES is seeking to get the transition to a low carbon economy as its central purpose. Lots of technical stuff in it about banking powers. Ric had circulated the FoES briefing, in summary nothing has gone wrong so far that prevents what we want yet. Alexa prepared the RSPB response and the LINK one. A core governance point was integration with the Sustainable Development Goals which did not get picked up in the consultation analysis. There is appetite in the financial sector to use the SDGs in a more meaningful way. Should we be pushing this terms of funding for natural capital type projects, eg peatlands, loans to public authorities, long term financing of landscape scale restoration, flood risk management? It has been highlighted that they could be leveraging in more private funding through it. Bruce made similar points in the SWT response, being awake to non traditional investment opportunities. If we are talking about a mission orientated bank, in order to achieve a transition to a low carbon economy, where would peatlands or flood management be in the hierarchy? There is still a lot of thinking to be done. It must not become just a way of financing small businesses which other banks don’t do. There will be a consultation later in 2018. We expect appointment of a chair.

Just Transition Commission: no specific news. No progress from Govt. The JT Partnership has written its proposals. Its recommendation is that it the commission reports to both ministers of Fair work and Climate Change; that it reports to Parliament; and that it needs resources and secretariat if it is going to be of use. **Matthew** will circulate.

Deposit return scheme: ZWS is conducting around 10 workshops with different types of stakeholders. Calum and Jenni and Charles Dundas (for LINK) were at the one for eNGOs. These will be finished by April. There will be 3 or 4 design options. There is a board, SEPA, HIE, SGovt and others, and the aim is to have it implemented by 2019. It is possible that Michael Gove will announce something similar in the next few weeks. The chief anxiety would be if it didn’t cover a broad range of materials, and if they did not implement a return to retailer model. ZWS are on the ball, so not too worried, and David Barnes, leading the project, is very good. When the options are out, the HYGTB coalition will examine them to see what will be best, and then it will be good to have wider support. It can be shared with members. Some countries omit containers with dairy or milk based products on hygiene grounds. Matthew asked if any of the arguments for or against are in terms of economic harm of good? People refer to it in relation to their own sector. DB outlined the positives, for it being an economically sound model. It is being discussed in terms of CE. HYGTB has its preferred system, and will be doing a press release. **Jenni** to share information round the group

Government owned energy company: no updates.

Meeting with SNH on the work plan: Bruce and Matthew met Tom McKenna, the designated SNH lead. He was supportive and interested. No take away action. We are confident the links are in place and will **involve him in the Advisory Group**.

**4. Member updates**

Calum: Catherine Gemmell MCS been very busy on media on plastics, relates to actions coming from the Marine Litter Strategy steering group. One action is being led by MCS head office, how plastic leaks into the sea, gets out of the circle, out of the producer responsibility cycle. Marine Scotland happy for MCS to do it with others. Eunomia is doing the work (a potential for our Advisory group). They are doing looking at tax, some work commissioned to inform the NGO position on that consultation. Levies are devolved, so some overlap on taxation proposals if on reserved taxes.

Matthew: FoES works with the New Economics Foundation, which has an offshoot network, NEON. It has done some interesting research around [framing the economy](http://neweconomics.org/2018/02/framing-the-economy-2/); ways of talking about the economy that encourages fresh thinking. Matthew is thinking of engaging with them to look at how the Just Transition Partnership talks about the economy, and **potentially this would be useful to this Group too**.

**5. Economic Group Workplan**

Forward plan is what Phoebe will do, plus what we have discussed. Potentially we may want to look at framing of the economy. With the additional resource, we have some capacity to look at budgets and their scrutiny, and the consultation on the SNIB.

Integration with other LINK work areas: Bruce had an action from the Land Group to check if there is any appetite to explore Land Value Taxation within the EG. It is an economic lever that could be used for environmental goods. It is on the agenda of the Land Commission. The other issue is the Land Commission is looking into the use of charitable trusts to manage land. It is relatively easy to prove the public benefit of NGO-owned land, but could be resource intensive. **Bruce** will come back to the Group with a formal proposal.

Link with the Planning Bill. There are multiple amendments going in. One is around linking the National Planning Framework with the other national plans (Marine, Land Use Strategy) and the budget, to make this so that the budget follows what is in the NPF rather than the other way round.

It was agreed to produce a one pager about the project, to be used as an introduction close to when Phoebe starts work, including how people can engage with it. **Matthew** will draft. Also to be included in the agendas of meetings with externals coming up.

**Next meeting** second half of May. Alice to circulate doodle.