**Note of the LINK Economics Group meeting held on 16 January at the LINK office, Edinburgh.**

**Attending:** Matthew Crighton (FoES), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Lloyd Austin (RSPB), Jenni Hume (APRS), Calum Duncan (MCS), Denis Mollison (HWDT), James Curran (Hon Fellow), Jen Anderson (LINK CO), Daphne Vlastari (LINK AM), Alice Walsh (LINK DO).

**1. Welcome and Apologies**.
Matthew welcomed everyone. Ric Lander and David Downie sent apologies. This would probably be Lloyd’s last meeting and he was thanked for his input to date. RSPB would be represented by someone else (name tbc). **Action: Lloyd**

**2. Group membership, leadership, going forward.**
Members endorsed Matthew continuing as Convener and Bruce as Vice-Convener. Jenni and James would be added to the email list, also Catherine Gemmell leading the MCS work on plastics.
**Action: Alice**

**3. New project: *A Circular Economy for a Fairer Footprint*.**a. **Work Programme**
The bid (previously circulated and read by all) sets out the framework for this. The first need is to scope out within LINK member bodies, groups and subgroups to find out where all are coming from, what relevance the CE has to their work, so that we are well positioned to make alliances with others for a good CE bill. Depending on the timeline, and all timelines are being delayed by Brexit, we need to be ready to shift gear if it proceeds faster or if specific issues like plastics require a response. It was noted that the application said that there would be an internal meeting within 6 weeks of the officer starting.

Thoughts around the table on its relevance to members: Calum said that MCS been longstanding supporters of making the economy more circular because the remnants of a non-circular economy wash up on beaches, and for all the reasons that Blue Planet raised. MCS works with APRS and Fidra on deposit return and on plastics. Seeking extended producer responsibility for the full life cycle of what businesses produce, and for the regulatory framework to ensure sustainable businesses thrive. Working on this in England (Sue Kinsey leading). There are question marks around Scotland’s powers, and with Brexit, the EU powers and recognition that many products used here are made elsewhere.

Lloyd considers there is huge potential to draw on examples from other areas of LINK’s works, that we can complement what other work areas are doing with regard to greater circularity in resources, and where they can feed in to the project; eg nitrogen, for climate impacts, water pollution impacts. Peat, being used for horticulture, why is there no alternative yet. We could effectively canvass all the other LINK activities that would benefit from applying a circularity argument, and bring these to the Government’s attention, to give them opportunities to put their principles into action, that are within their powers.

Bruce noted that the Planning Bill (current), proposes changes to the National Planning Framework that will have a big impact, eg how housing areas are defined, scant attention to how they are heated, to transport links, siting relation to winds etc, it is very poor legislation. Also what relationship there is to the Warm Homes Bill. **Bruce has an action** to talk to Elizabeth Leighton (Hon Fellow and Existing Home Alliance coordinator) about this in relation to the Planning Bill.

James added that with nervousness around the CE legislation, it is vital the project is sufficiently flexible to be adaptable as we go on. Lots can be done now, all that’s holding it back is fear it won’t be financially viable. Look at opportunities that exist now, eg feedstuffs in marine fishfarming, phosphorus; measure in the Climate Act allowing ministers to stipulate recycling content. This project could scope out these very real opportunities. Target it so that businesses can set up with some confidence, as being good for the economy and for the environment.

Lloyd considered that if, after 3 years there has been no Bill, but that we have made good progress with 12 to 15 policy areas, that encourage greater circularity, we would call that a success. Worry the bill will be unsubstantive in intention, as feared regarding the Islands bill or the Good Food Nation bill.

Matthew said that was the reaction of colleagues at FoES International. ZWS had said it might be about taking it from a different framework, out of waste.

Jenni said that for APRS it is very relevant, the plastics issues are very current, and we need to be ready to go. There is no update yet on the announcement made in the Programme for Government in September. ZWS has been looking at other countries systems, though are not as far ahead as they expected, will find out more this week. Expecting public consultation in the Spring. Also Defra report on their public consultation was due any day.

Daphne said that as EEB members, we can be part of its CE working group. In Brussels the focus is a lot about recycled content, could be helpful to us with case studies and expertise. She is keeping a watching brief.

Bruce said that for SWT’s interests, natural capital provides the raw materials, if the economy is circular, there is less to extract. Scotland as a country is at the beginning of a CE journey. It is very relevant to the Natural Capital work in Scotland, particularly on agriculture.

**b. Delivery Group (co-options).**
There was discussion of the need for a separate project delivery group, and if so whether we needed to recruit external support, with better knowledge of the issues. It was agreed that a separate PDG beyond the EG was not needed at this stage, a steering group could be set up if needed further down the line. Note that EG meetings would need be long enough to ensure delivery of the project was covered on each agenda.

There were other ways of drawing in expertise. Matthew felt that unless the person has sufficient knowledge of resource and CE issues, we will need to bring in outside help and expertise. Others agreed. There are experts in ZWS as the NDPB, Ellen McArthur Foundation, and Eunomia, which APRS uses as consultants ad hoc, and who are very active in policy making at EU level. Maurice Golden MSP knows a lot.

James, from other roles, suggests an advisory panel works well, mutually beneficial to those taking part as well, and asked were there academics to draw on? It was agreed it would be best to have a separate group of people we could use as sounding board, which the officer could help set up. James offered to help, noting that we don’t need to listen to them, but they can challenge. There is a network of people working on deposit return and plastics. Also some of the EU contacts. It could be a virtual panel, much done by email, and the peer review function would give added weight.

**c. Post’s recruitment: JD and person spec; timeline and panel.**

It was agreed that the range of functions justified the title of Sustainable Economics Officer.

It was agreed that as our key audiences are non expert, and we will be addressing a layman type audience, that a general knowledge and ability to source expertise, being able to collate information and communicate it, were more important than expertise in CE issues per se. They should have an understanding of sustainable economics and resource issues. The priority is that they grasp the big picture, can articulate it well. The person specification needed to be very clear for the interview. This was amended line by line, with agreement on the essentials and the desirables. The same was done for the Job Description.

Matthew, Bruce and Jen would be the panel. Jenni offered if needed. It was agreed to use the Environment Jobs UK website, and use various networks eg SSN, Climate 20:50, SCCS and other channels that members are plugged into, eg Natural Capital. Goodmoves was not considered value for money for this post. There would be 5 weeks for applications.
**Action: Jen and Matthew to revise the JD & PS in light of discussion.**
**d. Hosting and line management.**
Matthew was willing to be line manager – all agreed it works well for the convener to do this.
It was agreed that a member body or LINK should host the post in preference to paying an outside body. The Employer would be LINK. Jenni suggested APRS might be able to host.
**Action: Jen to follow up hosting options**

**4. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.**

National Performance Framework: there is a roundtable meeting next week which Daphne will attend. Looking to review the purpose statement as well as outcomes and indicators. Proposal from Maggie Keegan (SWT) who? and Paul Walton (RSPB) (on behalf of the Wildlife Subgroup) is to write to the Minister, as it will lose the aspect of enhancing the environment. here has been damage which needs rectifying. Also dropping some key indicators on biodiversity, and more. See email circulated by Daphne at end 2017 in relation.
**Action: Daphne to draft and send it before the meeting.**

**5. Updates:** Nothing substantive has changed on the Scottish National Investment Bank, the Just Transition Commission, and Government-owned Energy Company.

World Forum on Natural Capital: Bruce reported it was the biggest event yet. It felt like the conversation has progressed a bit, the FM’s speech had some good things in it. It brought a lot of Interpol delegates interested in wildlife crime, in Scotland illegal dumping is a big issue. Sepa has a seat on Interpol. There was a high level official meeting opened by Roseanna Cunningham. There will be an infographic soon of the top 10 outcomes, which Bruce will circulate. If running it again (a lot of work) it will be in 2 years. **Action: Bruce to circulate infographic**

**6. Economics Group work plan 2018 and integration with other LINK Groups**.
This will be completed at the next meeting, also the advocacy strategy – For next meeting.
The regular meeting cycle with Roseanna Cunningham and Fergus Ewing was an opportunity for all priority areas to flag timely issues.
This Group usually comments on the budget. For next agenda, and also what we want to take to ministers.
Next meeting to consider the advisory panel.

All groups asked to identify for Daphne their key asks of government in the next 1 to 2 years, fairly quickly, ie before the next meeting, to see if they can be included in the next Programme for Govt.

The annual meeting with SNH as per Grant conditions: **Alice to contact Bruce and Matthew about this.**

Integration with other Groups will be through identifying the key areas of circularity with other link groups once the officer is in post.

Calum updated on some of the Marine Group’s activities. Sea Scotland conference. June. Sgov is committed to a conference in 2019 to take a lead on plastics in the marine environment.

The EU has just published its plastics strategy. SWT is in support of the deposit return scheme though not duplicating. Many LINK members support the bottle campaign. RSPB supporting a lot of plastic related activity internationally - albatrosses and penquins. WDC is active on some related areas, as is HWDT. There are networks at a UK level. Greenpeace very active on it, and Surfers against Sewage.

Denis noted that the idea that we should be recycling all well and good, but washing fleece made out of recycled cups causes lots of damage. Serious point is that recycling is not the answer. Needs to be greater emphasis on reduction. That is where this role will be important. Lots of gesture politics. Fidra is working with Calum and Jenni, on nurdles and cotton buds, have people who work in political. Need to look in detail about what is happening on composting systems – Jenny Mollison (SAGS), know a lot about this. Fidra could be part of an advisory panel. And SEPA.

**8. Date of future meetings.**
Next one for March. Alice to doodle.

**Note of key points of the inception meeting with Joanne Hall, FPF, on 18 January.**JA and AW attending.

FPF is interested in learning more about the CE, its becoming a theme in bids, and wishes to be involved in our events to get a better feel for the area, opps also to meet and discuss with members – 2 or 3 a year would be good. Ours is a first experiment by FPF funding CE. FPF does not currently fund anything else in Scotland – opportunity for more good bids about system change and economic resilience. Trustees are happy to fund lobbying and advocacy.

Reporting and invoicing. We can fit payments to our financial year (April to March). Payments are in arrears after receipt of invoice. Can be a short first quarter to fit with our recruitment. Quarterly catch up phone calls or emails on progress required for her to report to trustees mid May, August, November, February. Invoices by 20th of the month for approval. Annual reports required against agreed milestones (tbc). We can use FPF to advertise events, outputs, and Jo can put us in touch with other projects (none similar currently).

Contingency should the Bill not proceed, a known risk. FPF want us to be in close touch about that, to have a plan b. Need milestones from us at the start, we explained this may need to wait until the officer is in post to be firmer. Could be twin track, if Bill proceeds, if it does not, so need a firm set of secondary items.

Once officer is in post, set up a meeting with Joanne. LINK reception 17 April potential date.