

# Meeting of the Cross-Party Group on the Circular Economy

8<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – 6pm

**Location: The Scottish Parliament and online via Microsoft Teams**

## Present

### MSPs

- Maurice Golden MSP
- Lorna Slater MSP

### Invited Guests

- Dr Lynn Wilson – Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow
- Dr Esra Aydogdu – Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow
- Catherine Gemmell – Marine Conservation Society
- Cecilia Parker Aranha – Competition and Markets Authority
- Wendy Rayner – NHS Scotland
- Barbara Riddell – NHS Scotland

### Non-MSP Group Members and Guests

- Abraham Zhang
- Alessia Vacca
- Alice Welsh
- Amol Ashok Jadh
- Angus Murdoch
- Anna Schulz
- Anthony Burns
- Calum Duncan
- Caroline Newton
- Catherine Gunby
- Cheryl Hall
- Chloe Anderson
- Chloe Holland
- Conor Blessing
- Daniel Stunell
- Esra Aydogdu
- Fiona McLachlan
- Fiona Thomas
- Gareth Cunnigham
- Izzie Eriksen
- Jane Findlay
- Jennifer Decker
- Jim Brown

- Julia Roebuck
- Kathryn Gill
- Kirsteen Stewart
- Katrina Cuthbertson
- Katy Dimmock
- Kenneth Bodies
- Kim Pratt
- Lily Snowden
- Louis MacMillan
- Lucy Wishart
- Luke Padfield
- Lynne Craig
- Mary Morton
- Matt Lewis
- Maxine Scott
- Melissa Marques
- Nadia Alexander
- Niki Taylor
- Paul McNally
- Paul McNeil
- Paul Smith
- Paulina Navrouzoglou
- Phoebe Cochrane
- Rebecca Smith
- Roger Costa-Pellizzoni
- Ros Studd
- Saskia Quelleron
- Stephen Freeland
- Toni Freitas
- Victoria Derbyshire
- Wendy Freeman
- Winifred Ijomah

## **Apologies**

- Alex Morrison (Keep Scotland Beautiful)
- Brian Whittle MSP
- Bruce Reekie
- James Tolland
- Maggie Chapman MSP
- Monica Lennon MSP
- Sarah Boyack MSP

## **Agenda Item 1: Welcome and AGM**

Maurice Golden was proposed by Lorna Slater MSP and seconded by Phoebe Cochrane to continue as convener of the group.

Lorna Slater was adopted as a member of the group and along with Monica Lennon MSP and Mark Russell MSP was proposed by Maurice Golden MSP and seconded by Catherine Gemmell to act as Vice Conveners.

Maurice Golden MSP thanked Phoebe Cochrane for her service as part of the group secretariat. It was proposed that Friends of the Earth Scotland (represented at the meeting by Kim Pratt) should join Fidra, the Marine Conservation Society and Keep Scotland Beautiful as the group secretariat. Proposed by Paul Smith and seconded by Lorna Slater MSP.

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed and seconded by Maurice Golden MSP and Lorna Slater MSP.

## **Agenda Item 2: Presentations**

### **Dr Lynn Wilson and Dr Esra Aydogdu (Adam Smith Business School) - Presentation of a new paper on European textile policy**

Presentation: Circular Citizens Clothing and Textiles. Policy Review: Opportunities for Scotland. Dr Lynn Wilson and Dr Esra Aydogdu: Adam Smith Business School

- It was noted that the meeting was being held on World Circular Textile Day, representing the work towards 2050 when we have full circular systems in place and that it was wonderful to celebrate this today.
- Dr Wilson noted the presentation would be looking at everything through the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act
- It was explained that current focus was on research due to carbon emissions from textiles in Scotland being so high. Within that, the focus was on consumer behaviour with a desire to put citizens at the heart of our resources. It was noted there was a need to address citizens behaviour as the most critical aspect of the circular economy.
- Dr Wilson noted that we are all responsible and HH's need support and mechanisms to reduce overconsumption and improve circularity, and it was exciting to now have the Circular Economy Act in force.
- Dr Wilson explained her frustration on first reading the Act and that there was a need to look at how we marry up ambitions.
- In particular, Dr Wilson pointed to Section 1.6 of the Act as being exciting, and noted that encouraging behaviour change is within the Act.
- However, it was noted that there was a need for investment behind this.
- Within the waste hierarchy the focus should be on refuse, reduce and reuse as priorities.
- It was recognised that there are only so many things we can do in Scotland. At the UK level, the UK Government must provide frameworks that can push this forward.

- There has already been the 2018 fixing fashion report from EAC, but none of the recommendations were really implemented. Further work was done in 2021 with a call for extended producer responsibility (EPR). WRAP presented a framework for EPR (Eunomia report). Designing better products, covering costs, governance and administration, producer fees etc.
- It was noted that the EU are further ahead with EPR than the UK. They have EPR for textiles and it will be transition for retailers.
- Digital product passports have many facets and are an opportunity for textile circularity throughout the lifecycle of an item of clothing – such as through greater traceability and transparency and giving consumer critical product information currently unavailable on labels.
- It was argued that the most exciting aspect in Europe is the Right to Report e.g. France (re-fashion) – <https://ft.citoyen.fr/bonus-reparation>.
- However, innovation alone is not sufficient and therefore social innovation has been developed over the past 30 years (Murray et al) to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaboration. These must include a system level change and be profoundly transformative.
- It was noted that circular practices in Scotland are often innovated in the third sector with substantial support for these from Scottish Government.
- Social innovation aims to alter societal behaviour and help groups make different choices.
- A sampling exercise was carried out on what was happening in Scotland – social enterprises were strong in Scotland regarding textile circularity. E.g. circular retail activity in the Stockbridge area of Edinburgh as an aspiration for Scotland.
- ACS Clothing was mentioned as an example of good practice.
- Further effort was needed to encourage greater use with a suggestion to follow Sweden, for example, to reduce VAT on clothing rental.
- In terms of youth and active consumer agency opportunities to address inequality, it was noted there was a need to transition to more natural fibres. As a consequence, there should be a national strategy to pull all this good work together.
- Regarding disposal, it was observed that we are seeing more sales platforms (local community platforms as well as ebay/Vinted, etc. ) and that it was better to use those local community platforms.
- The next step is designing a social innovation model that can be tested in a local community. If a pilot was successful, it could be scaled up to other locations around Scotland. As such, a working group is being launched to look at this aspect and allow for such a model to be peer reviewed. An invitation was extended to those present to join a short-term working group.
- As a final point, an invitation for the 4<sup>th</sup> Nov Circular Clothing Social Innovation Lab at Bertha Park High School was highlighted. This will allow for feedback from pupils on their current experience of clothing (with a view to producing films based on that feedback).

## **Catherine Gemmell (Marine Conservation Society) - #StopOceanThreads campaign**

How to reduce microfibre pollution from clothes – #stopoceanthreads

- The #stopoceanthreads campaign was designed to raise awareness of the issue of microfibres in our seas and oceans. A short video was then shown to provide background information.
- Microfibres are a huge issue for the health of our oceans but also for human health.
- One of the key aims of the campaign was a public friendly ask – to make it mandatory for the UK Government to ensure microfibre filters were included in all washing machines from 2024
- The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Microplastics has been looking at the issue.
- Crucially, the inclusion of filters has been commercially proven with at least one manufacturer demonstrating fibre catcher technology in its machines.
- The issue received an important boost when MP Alberto Costa presented a Microfibre Bill in the UK Parliament.
- At a wider public level, action on a petition has seen 44,000 signatures gathered.
- Looking at practical steps that can be taken. It was explained that a simple but effective means of reducing microfibre pollution was to wash clothes less frequently along with less tumble drying.
- It was noted that in France it will be mandatory from 2025 onwards to have this filtration technology in new washing machines.
- The task now is to persuade the UK Government to get behind the proposal.

## **Wendy Rainer and Barbara Riddell (NHS Scotland) – NHS Circular Economy Programme**

- With net zero deadlines in place, procurement is a significant issue for the NHS.
- There are important factors to consider around material scarcity and price volatility. For example, fifty per cent of all medical devices in Scotland are single use, which creates inherent risks (e.g. Covid and supply chain disruption).
- Wanting to do something different requires actually doing something differently, and this is where the circular economy comes in.
- Collaboration is critical between NHS Scotland, industry and academia along with the wider UK and international context. For example, NHS Highland has been looking at the issue of microfibres) whilst national procurement has been looking at what types of plastics are needed and how they can be reused.
- The vision is to embed environmental sustainability into every clinical and managerial decision with an aim to reduce the NHS' carbon footprint.

- Progress has been made already, such as on reducing waste.
- Increasing the use of reusable textile products faces challenges. The NHS are currently in a single use situation where the infrastructure for laundry no longer exists. The question is therefore how to come back from this situation e.g. aprons are all disposable at present with staff being used to using them. Thus behaviour change is an important consideration in changing this.
- Different solutions may be appropriate for different locations and situations e.g. rural vs urban. Some trials have already been carried out e.g. Ellis and Revolution Zero.
- Work is underway to deliver Scottish Government objectives, including changing the culture, building capacity, increasing system resilience and looking at local employment.
- Reusable textile products has the potential to displace single use items, such as surgical gowns and achieve significant carbon savings. But it is important to test with patients to see how they feel about using them.

### **Cecilia Parker Aranha (Competition and Markets Authority) – Greenwashing**

- A use set of standards on reducing greenwashing was provided through casework files opened on a number of businesses.
- The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) have produced a compliance guide for the sector looking at issues, such as labelling with best practice advice provided.
- In terms product composition, steps should be taken to avoid using clothing names that are misleading e.g. organic cotton (if 50% then brands should no longer do this).
- A key issue was looking at how to deal with accreditations without misleading consumers.
- It was noted that action from the CMA on microplastics was challenging under current consumer protection law.
- Another challenge was the sheer volume of advertising and not something easily addressed, which may suggest the need for further legislation.
- It was noted that work was ongoing with the OECD on consumer protection and that this should be available soon.
- The CMA have finished their work within the fashion space but are now looking at green washing in other spaces. They are also looking at direct enforcement action to speed things up. They have the power to fine businesses up to 10% of global turnover.

### **Agenda Item 4 – Open Discussion**

- It was noted in the online chat that there was a white paper calling for a variable fee for textiles EPR - presented at UKFT conference two weeks prior:

<https://www.qsapartners.co.uk/qsa-unveils-its-epr-white-paper-a-once-in-a-generation-opportunity-for-impactful-change/>

- Lorna Slater made the point that people listing items for sale using online platforms can sometimes use misleading adverts e.g. clothing that is advertised as natural fibres but when you get it, they are synthetic.
- Cecelia Parker Aranha replied to say the digital markets section can put in place a code of conducts for these platforms, but there is an enforcement gap.
- Maurice Golden asked a question around access.
- Lynn Wilson replied that there was a need to develop different business models and that research was important. In looking at how to make things sustainable there was discussion of a white paper being prepared and a suggestion of using AI to identify sustainable fashion.
- Maurice Golden then asked Lynn Wilson and Esra Aydogdu what success would look like.
- They responded that it would be a national strategy that involved everyone in Scotland.
- A final talking point was raised on how to achieve behaviour change within the textiles space (through nudges or regulation) and how to get consumers to what is best for them and the planet.
- Wendy Rayner responded to the point on behaviour change and said there was a need for superior garments, so that people feel valued (clinicians), etc. Further, a resource stewardship group is important as procurement is important.
- Catherine Gemmell argued that barriers from both government and industry are holding us back and that young people are keen to change.
- Celia Parker Aranha explained that the consumer landscape is complicated. The CMA doesn't have a public facing role and uses its own intelligence gathering. She said a lack of balance in information means consumers don't know they are being misled. Thus, there can't be solely a reliance on consumer choice and perhaps we need to remove some of these choices.
- Lynn Wilson and Ezra Aydogdu pointed to EPR/Digital Product Passports and discussed managing all the different actors to change behaviour. They noted the importance of consumer agency and observed there was still so much that we don't know. Thus, using the Circular Economy Bill to raise public awareness on these issues is critical. They recognised that education and skill development is critical but noted that many consumers don't have the ability to properly assess products resulting in choosing products that are economically cheaper in the short-term but more expensive over the long-term due to their inferior quality. They reiterated the need for a pilot study.
- Maurice Golden thanked those present and brought the meeting to a close.