

# **Cross-Party Group on Wellbeing Economy**

6<sup>th</sup> of September 2024, 11:00-12:30 pm, on Zoom

Minute

Present

MSPs

Emma Harper MSP, Maggie Chapman MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Maurice Golden MSP

Invited guests

Prof Matthew Hannon, Sophie Howe, Alan Cameron, Amanda Grimm, Anna Wyatt, Carwyn, Claudia Albrecht, Councillor Kate MacLean, David Petrie, David Stewart, Duncan Thorp, Evelyn Henderson-Child, Fabio Villani, Helen Reilly, Jackie Queally, Jamie Barker, Javier Dominguez, Jayne Saywell, Jilly Burns, Joshua Evans, Josie Saunders, Julian Caldecott, Mark Langdon, Martin Clarke, Matthew Crighton, Naomi Mason, Neil MacCallum, Resilience Learning Partnership, Rob Davison, Roland Chaplain, Neville Makan, Susan Pollick, Barry Steven, Warren Smith

Non-MSP Group Members

Allan Faulds (The Alliance), Angela Lamont, Claire Duncanson, Dani Trudeau (Tribe Party), Gemma Campbell (Scottish Land Commission), George Hosking (WAVE Trust), Gill Davies, Hannah Ormston (Carnegie UK), Ian McCall (Paths for All), Juliette Summers, Kevin Kane (Youthlink Scotland), Laura Worku (DTAS), Tom Sneddon (DTAS), Martin Meteyard (Co-operate Scotland), Rachel Le Noan (SCVO), Renata Osowska, Sara Cowan (SWBG), Sarah Latto (Volunteer Scotland), Susan McKellar (The Scottish Women's Convention), Lukas Bunse (WEAll Scotland), Alex Turner (WEAll Scotland), Brian Connolly (WEAll Scotland), Michael Weatherhead (WEAll), Nathanael Smith (Office of Sarah Boyack MSP), Paul Hainey (WEAll Scotland),

Apologies

Aileen McLeod (WEAll Scotland), Sarah Deas, Margaret Douglas

# 1 Welcome and CPG business

## AGM

### **Approval of previous Minutes**

- Maggie Chapman MSP proposed adoption of the previous minutes, seconded by Sarah Boyack MSP and confirmed with no objections from group members.

### **Election of office bearers**

- Maggie Chapman MSP and Emma Harper MSP nominated by Maurice Golden MSP as co-convenors of the group, seconded by Sarah Boyack and confirmed with no objections from group members.
- Emma Harper sought nominations for deputy convenors. No nominations were proposed.

### **Appointment of Secretariat**

- Emma Harper MSP nominated Lukas Bunse/Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland as secretariat, which was seconded by Maggie Chapman MSP and confirmed without objections from group members.

## Other CPG Business

- The CPG is open to collaborating with members interested in organising specific topics.
- Meetings will now be recorded to document speakers and slides for minutes and to share with those who miss them. Attendees should keep their cameras off if they prefer not to be recorded.
- The Secretariat apologised for cancelling the June meeting due to a parliamentary debate, noting that future meetings will primarily be held online on Friday mornings to prevent such conflicts. The topic of economic democracy will be revisited in December, while the current meeting focuses on the timely issue of the UN Summit on Future Generations.

## 2 Panel: Building a wellbeing economy fit for the future

### *2.1 Why does Scotland need a Wellbeing & Sustainable Development Bill and what would it look like?* – Sarah Boyack MSP, Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Lothian Region

Sarah Boyack is a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for the Lothian region. Currently, she is the Scottish Labour spokesperson on energy, just transition, and net zero. Outside of Parliament, she has experience in the housing sector and academia.

Sarah Boyack emphasised the urgency and importance of her proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill for Scotland. She highlighted three key elements of her bill:

1. **Definition of Wellbeing and Sustainable Development:** The bill would establish clear definitions, which are currently lacking in Scottish legislation.
2. **Duties for Public Bodies:** It would require all public bodies to integrate wellbeing and sustainable development into their decision-making processes, drawing lessons from Wales' experience.
3. **Creation of a Commissioner for Wellbeing and Sustainable Development:** This role would ensure leadership, collaboration, and guidance for public authorities, modelled on Wales' successful implementation.

Sarah noted that although there is cross-party support, the bill remains in the drafting stage, and collaboration with the Scottish Government is still a possibility. She expressed concern that Scotland could lag behind internationally in wellbeing governance and reiterated the urgency for action to prevent delays in implementation, especially with the current parliamentary session nearing its end.

Sarah reflected on lessons from the UN and international experiences, particularly in Wales, underscoring the advantages of long-term investments in a wellbeing economy. She stressed the importance of leadership, scrutiny, and collaboration across all government levels and public bodies for a sustainable and prosperous future for Scotland.

While acknowledging concerns about the number of commissioners and funding, she argued that the initiative would align well with the Auditor General for Scotland, who lacks resources for this remit. She maintained that the funding is minimal in the broader

context. Sarah concluded by reaffirming her commitment to work with other parliamentarians and organisations to advance the bill.

## *2.2 Why is such a Bill needed for a Wellbeing Economy?* – Lukas Bunse, Policy and Engagement Lead at WEAll Scotland

Lukas, standing in for Aileen McLeod, emphasised the importance of the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill from the perspective of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) Scotland. He explained why the organisation strongly supports the bill, despite it not being directly linked to traditional economic topics.

Lukas outlined four key principles that guide the creation of a wellbeing economy: purpose, prevention, participation, and pre-distribution, highlighting how the bill supports the first three principles:

1. Purpose: The bill would help shift the focus of the economy away from short-term GDP growth to social justice and a healthy planet, creating a clear wellbeing framework that aligns economic policy with broader societal values.
2. Prevention: It would help tackle the root causes of issues like poverty and climate change by encouraging long-term thinking and requiring public bodies to adopt a preventative approach in their decision-making.
3. Participation: The bill emphasises meaningful participation from citizens and organisations in shaping national outcomes and wellbeing frameworks. The proposed Future Generations Commissioner could facilitate participatory processes, such as citizen dialogues and councils.

Lukas expressed disappointment that the recent Programme for Government made only a brief mention of the wellbeing economy without concrete plans for action. He reflected that Scotland, despite its early leadership in this area, is now lagging behind international progress on wellbeing and sustainable development. However, he stressed that Sarah Boyack's members' bill remains a hopeful opportunity for cross-party collaboration and public support to bring Scotland back into a leadership role.

Lukas closed by encouraging continued cooperation between government, parliament, and civil society to ensure the bill's success.

### *2.3 How can we make sure that the Bill will improve the sustainability of communities?* – Prof Matthew Hannon, Professor of Sustainable Energy Business and Policy and Director of the Strathclyde Institute for Sustainable Communities, University of Strathclyde

Matthew Hannon is Professor of Sustainable Energy Business and Policy at the Hunter Centre within Strathclyde Business School and Director of the Strathclyde Institute for Sustainable Communities. His research examines the business models, policies and technologies necessary to accelerate a net-zero transition that empowers and enriches communities.

Matt discussed how the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill could enhance community sustainability. While he welcomed the bill's focus on wellbeing and sustainable development as essential public policy drivers, he noted key considerations for effective implementation.

He emphasised three main points:

1. **Definitions of Wellbeing and Sustainability:** While broad definitions are essential, they must be adaptable to reflect each community's unique geography, history, and cultural values. A “one-size-fits-all” approach is inadequate; the bill should enable communities to define these concepts through participatory and deliberative means for tailored solutions.
2. **Policy measures to improve wellbeing and sustainability** will inevitably benefit some communities more than others. For example, a funded peatland restoration project might serve one community but not another. He stressed the importance of prioritising those most in need while navigating trade-offs across Scotland's 11 national outcomes to ensure equitable distribution of resources and benefits.
3. **The governance landscape** includes local authorities, community councils, and non-statutory bodies, complicating the alignment of national wellbeing and sustainability goals with local actions. Effective governance structures must foster collaboration among these entities and empower communities through transparent, inclusive, and accountable participation. Matt highlighted the necessity of listening to communities and ensuring they are adequately supported to shape local sustainable development.

In summary, Matt called for flexible definitions of wellbeing and sustainability, careful attention to policy trade-offs, and strong local governance to achieve the bill's objectives. He referenced a recent report on community participation in natural capital projects, reinforcing the significance of empowering communities in these initiatives.

## 2.4 How could Scotland benefit from a Future Generations Commissioner? – Sophie Howe, former Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Sophie Howe, the first Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2016-2023), shared insights from her experience with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, passed in Wales in 2015. The Act was driven by public demand and political champions for sustainable development to become a core principle of government.

She shared reflections on why the Welsh Act has been so successful:

1. The Act was informed by a national conversation, *The Wales We Want*, where citizens expressed their vision for future generations. This feedback led to the creation of seven long-term wellbeing goals for Wales, aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Public bodies in Wales, including the Welsh Government, local authorities, and health boards, are required to set objectives that contribute to all seven wellbeing goals. This framework promotes collaboration across sectors and integration of goals such as ecological resilience, economic prosperity, and public health.
3. The Act establishes a long-term vision that spans beyond political cycles, encouraging public bodies to plan with future generations in mind. A key principle of the Act is "backcasting," where decisions are made based on the desired future state and working backwards from there.
4. 'Five Ways of Working': Public bodies must apply five key principles:
  - Long-term thinking: Consider future impacts.
  - Prevention: Address root causes of problems.
  - Integration: Recognize connections across policy areas.
  - Collaboration: Work collectively through Public Service Boards.
  - Involvement: Engage citizens in decision-making through co-production.
5. The role of the Future Generations Commissioner in being responsible for ensuring public bodies follow these principles, promoting collaboration across policy areas, and helping public servants develop skills for long-term thinking. Sophie emphasised that the Commissioner plays a crucial role in ensuring that public bodies move beyond creating plans and take meaningful action.

In closing, Sophie reinforced the importance of having a future generations-focused commissioner to ensure accountability and guide the practical implementation of sustainability and wellbeing goals. She encouraged Scotland to consider these insights as it develops its own wellbeing and sustainable development legislation.

### 3 Audience questions

**Question 1: How could approaches such as ["social imaginaries" and collective imagination](#) in planning for the future be integrated into education and long-term planning to help communities shape sustainable futures?**

*(asked by Mark Landon)*

Panel answers:

- Sophie acknowledged the importance of collective imagination and agreed that engaging citizens in envisioning their future is crucial. She highlighted how Wales had undertaken a similar approach through the national conversation, The Wales We Want, and emphasised the role of creativity in public services. She noted examples such as social prescribing and creative residencies in the health service, which helped shape innovative and values-driven approaches to service delivery.
- Matt supported Sophie's points, adding that visioning exercises are valuable in helping communities shape their future, but he expressed concern about the lack of follow-through in many cases. He emphasised the need for these participatory processes to have "teeth" and for communities to see the results of their efforts to avoid depleting their energy and commitment.
- Sarah stressed the importance of empowering communities through local place plans and highlighted the need for stronger local links to create opportunities, especially in areas like renewables. She mentioned the importance of ensuring community investment and collaboration to enhance local sustainability efforts.

**Question 2: What is the role of the Future Generations Commissioner in fostering collaboration between the public, private, and third sectors for long-term planning?**

*(asked by Josie Saunders)*

Panel answers:

- Sophie explained that while the Act primarily covers public bodies, there are mechanisms for involving the third and private sectors. She pointed out that third sector organisations are statutory members of Public Service Boards and contribute to wellbeing assessments and plans. In terms of the private sector, she mentioned that public procurement is a key route for encouraging private sector alignment with the Act's goals. She provided examples of private sector companies voluntarily aligning with the wellbeing goals, such as the Principality Building Society and the Football Association of Wales.

**Question 3: How can the extensive evidence gathered by the Commission of Inquiry, which strongly supports the wellbeing and sustainability agenda around future generations, be used to strengthen the economic case for these goals in Scotland? Would the panel be interested in utilising this evidence to reinforce their efforts?**

*(asked by George Hosking)*

Panel answers:

- Sophie acknowledged the challenges of working within devolved administrations but emphasised that substantial progress can still be made even without UK-wide alignment. She cited examples like the Basic Income pilot in Wales, which was adapted due to lack of cooperation from the UK Government. However, she noted that there are still ways to navigate these challenges and that the devolved administrations have considerable scope for action.
- Matt echoed Sophie's sentiments, noting the shared frustrations between the Welsh and Scottish governments as devolved administrations. He stressed the importance of UK-wide cooperation to fully unlock the potential of systems thinking in wellbeing and sustainability efforts. However, he also recognised the opportunities within devolved powers to make significant progress.
- Sarah reinforced the importance of cross-government collaboration at all levels, including between the UK, Scottish, and local governments. She highlighted the potential of initiatives like GB Energy to facilitate long-term planning and investment, noting the private sector's desire for certainty in making sustainable investments.

## 4 Closing remarks: Identifying policy priorities and next steps

- Matt reiterated the importance of learning from other countries and regions that have implemented similar wellbeing and sustainable development policies, noting that Scotland initiated these discussions but is now a few chapters behind other nations in terms of progress.
- Sarah stressed the need for continued collaboration to keep wellbeing and sustainable development high on the political agenda. She mentioned her Member's Bill is in the drafting phase and urged everyone to engage their networks to support the bill. She highlighted the importance of Scotland not being left behind and urged action across sectors, including health, renewables, and housing, to embed wellbeing in public policy.



- Sophie highlighted the global momentum around future generations and wellbeing legislation, noting movements in countries like Spain, Portugal, Norway, the US, and Kenya. She stressed the need for civil society engagement, political champions, and building infrastructure and capacity within the system to ensure long-term intergenerational fairness.
- Lulas highlighted the importance of meaningful participation at the community level. He noted the challenge of securing government funding to support these efforts and proposed exploring alternative funding sources to enable the national conversation and participatory processes.

#### Action items

- Review and learn from the experiences of other countries that have implemented wellbeing and sustainable development policies.
- Encourage members to engage their local MSPs and support the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill.
- Support systemic capacity-building to ensure long-term success.
- Investigate alternative funding sources to support meaningful community participation and national conversations on wellbeing.

The next CPG on Wellbeing Economy meeting will focus on economic democracy and will be held on Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2024, as an online meeting.

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## Appendix: Links mentioned or posted in the chat

Imagining socioecological transformation: An analysis of the Welsh Government's policy innovations and orientations to the future: [Article](#)

Book recommendation: *The Capital Order* by Clara Mattei (on wellbeing economics and democracy)

Carnegie UK's How a strengthened National Performance Framework can drive effective government in Scotland by Dr. Max French: [Report](#)

New UN ITU Working Group on 'Intergenerational Procurement for People-Centered Cities' with a call for Scottish representation: [Link](#)

*Community Participation for Community Benefits from Natural Capital Projects*: [Report](#)

Sarah Boyack's recent debate in Parliament: [Debate Transcript](#)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Collective Imagination Practice Community: [Link](#)

A Community-led Vision for Moray\_ (Moray Local Action Group): [Link](#)

Proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill - [Summary of Consultation Responses](#)

Earth for All: A Survival Guide for Humanity: [Link](#)

Carnegie UK: Learning from Wales' Future Generations Commissioner: [Briefing](#)

Developing Scotland's Economy: Increasing The Role Of Inclusive And Democratic Business Models: [Independent Report](#)

The Science of "Muddling Through" Lindblom, Charles E. "The Science of 'Muddling Through.'" *Public Administration Review* 19, no. 2 (1959): 79–88: [Journal Article](#) (on short-termism in business and government)

Contact details

Sophie Howe: [sophie@sophiehoweassc.com](mailto:sophie@sophiehoweassc.com)

George Hosking: Provided contact information for those interested in learning more about the Commission of Inquiry into Transforming Scotland: [ghosking@wavetrust.org](mailto:ghosking@wavetrust.org)

Mark Langdon: Provided contact information for those interested in discussing social imagination practice: [mark.langdon@uws.ac.uk](mailto:mark.langdon@uws.ac.uk)