

Cross-Party Group on Rural Policy

4 June 2025, 17:00–18:30 (Hybrid)

Making the Rural Economy More Circular

Minutes (Unapproved)

Present

MSPs

Edward Mountain MSP (Chair)

Speakers

Roy Hiddleston – Solway Recycling

Simon Flemington – Moray Waste Busters

Helen Ross – Arran Eco Savvy

Cheryl Ross – Zero Waste Scotland

Non-MSP Pre-registered attendees

Jane Atterton -Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

Sarah Baird -North Ayrshire Council

Sara Bradley

Sarah Bronsdon -Lower Impact Living CIC

James Calder -DCC Energy

Mike Danson -Strathnairn Development Company

Carey Doyle -SRUC

Claudia Erber -SEPA

Susan Evans -Resource Futures

Hannah Evans -Fidra

Fiona Fawcett

Simon Flemington -Moray Waste Busters

Gail Foster - NatureScot

Rachel Freeman

David Gass -Rural Matters

Catherine Gemmell -Marine Conservation Society

James Glendinning -SRUC

Stan Green -Horticultural Trades Association

Alice Hague -James Hutton Institute

Georgina Hart -Studio Hart

Andrew Heald -iNovaland

Nicola Hill -Dumfries & Galloway Council

Abbie Hudson

Jim Hume -Change Mental Health

Grace Hutchison

Ifeyinwa Kanu -IntelliDigest

Stephen Kelly

Anne-Michelle Ketteridge -Forth Valley and Lomond LAG/YLAG

Vicki Last -Scottish Islands Federation

Alice Lennox -Rare Breeds Survival Trust

Matt Lewis -Circular Communities Scotland

Roderick Low -Scottish Government

Jill Matthews -n/a

Lesley McKee -Change Mental Health

Tim McKeown -Thorntons Law

Ewen McLachlan -Northwest2045

Rob McMorran -Scottish Government

Michelle McWilliams -The Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen

Beatrice Morrice -NFU Scotland

A Packard

Catherine Parker -Historic Environment Scotland

Lorna Pate -SRUC

Meg Pirie -Fashion Roundtable

Elaine Pritchard -Lloyd's

Violet Ross

Colin Seditas -ClimateXChange

Sarah Skerratt -Royal Society of Edinburgh

Bryn Smith -SRUC

Rebecca Smith

Alex Smith -Braemar Community Council

Brady Stevens -SAC Consulting / Scotland's Rural College

Susan Thomson

Luiza Toma

Jo Vergunst -University of Aberdeen

Lisa Wilson

Apologies

MSPs

Ariane Burgess MSP

Emma Harper MSP

Non-MSP Apologies

Ann Packard

David Gass

Agenda Item 1

Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Edward Mountain MSP welcomed attendees and noted apologies. He confirmed that the meeting would be recorded and that the Secretariat (SRUC) would upload the video, slides (if used), and unapproved minutes to the Cross Party Group (CPG) webpage on the Rural Policy Centre (RPC) website. Attendees were reminded to email the Secretariat with any amendments to the minutes. The minutes will be formally approved at the next meeting.

Agenda Item 2

Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting and Actions

Edward Mountain MSP confirmed that no comments had been received on the unapproved minutes from the March 2025 meeting. The minutes were approved by Jo Vergunst and seconded by Lorna Dawson. No actions were identified from the previous meeting.

Agenda Item 3 - Discussion

Theme: Making the Rural Economy More Circular

Four presentations were delivered, followed by questions and discussion. A summary of each presentation is provided below.

Roy Hiddleston – Solway Recycling

Roy presented the journey of Solway Recycling, a family-run business specialising in agricultural plastic recycling. Key points included:

- Collection of farm plastic across Scotland and northern England using a bin and liner system.
- Recycled plastic processed into pellets and manufactured into durable products.
- Investment in a £1.5 million sheet line to produce plastic boards.

- Challenges include market bottlenecks and need for chemical recycling.
- Clear silage wrap offers greater recycling potential.
- Drivers for farmer use include SEPA regulations and farm assurance.

Key Questions & Responses:

- Susan Evans asked about replicability in aquaculture/fishing. Roy noted potential but would need to assess specific plastic types.
- Rachel Freeman asked about end-of-life recycling. Roy confirmed products are recyclable and have begun reprocessing older items.
- Edward Mountain MSP raised questions on seasonal fluctuations and market capacity. Roy confirmed summer is busier and market demand is the main bottleneck.

Simon Flemington – Moray Waste Busters

Simon described Moray Waste Busters as a reuse organisation co-located with the local Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) in Forres. Highlights included:

- 29 employees and 10 volunteers; forecast revenue of £730,000 in 2025.
- 275,000 items sold annually, diverting 300 tonnes from landfill.
- Strong community engagement and support, including education programmes and donations to 74 community groups.
- Plans to expand into a larger facility.
- Importance of co-location with HWRC and staff presence to encourage reuse.

Post meeting note: Simon provided a handout, attached separately.

Key Questions & Responses:

- Rachel Freeman asked about online expansion. Simon noted preference for hyperlocal, low-cost model.
- Susan Evans asked about comparative models. Simon emphasised staff presence and community engagement over passive container models.

Helen Ross – Arran Eco Savvy

Helen outlined Eco Savvy's circular economy initiatives on Arran:

- Community shop, zero-waste café, e-bike loan scheme, and energy advice services.
- Food share programme redistributed over 116 tonnes of food since 2018.

- Green Islands project calculated Arran's carbon footprint and developed a net-zero plan.

- Challenges include grid connection delays and short-term funding cycles.

Helen provided recommendations to scale up their work:

- Support for long-term circular economy funding (minimum three years).

- National support for local authority circular economy initiatives.

- Development of sustainable infrastructure on Arran.

Cheryl Ross – Zero Waste Scotland

Cheryl reflected on the presentations and highlighted:

- Importance of innovation and localised solutions in rural circular economy models.

- Need for markets for recycled products.

- Value of co-location and community engagement in reuse models.

- Circular economy aligns with wellbeing and community wealth building policy agendas.

- Shared links to Zero Waste Scotland's research on rural circular economy models and societal impacts.

Key Issues Raised in Discussion

- Sarah Bronsdon asked about mutual credit systems for community wealth building. Simon noted past examples but challenges in sustaining momentum.

- Matt Lewis (Circular Communities Scotland) emphasised early engagement with councils and the need for a reuse investment fund.

- Susan Evans highlighted the importance of staff presence in reuse models to drive behaviour change.

Action Points

- Draft letters to relevant Ministers:

- Gillian Martin MSP (Circular Economy) – on supporting HWRC co-location and reuse models.

- Jim Fairlie MSP (Agriculture) – on supporting agricultural plastic recycling.

- Minister for Islands – on supporting circular economy initiatives in island communities.

- All letters to include a request for long-term (minimum three-year) funding for circular economy initiatives.

AOB

Edward Mountain MSP thanked all speakers and attendees. He confirmed that the next meeting will be held in Autumn 2025, with the topic and date to be confirmed by the Secretariat.