

Cross Party Group on Malawi
Wednesday 6th June 2018
Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 2

MINUTES

Co-Conveners (CPG): Liam McArthur MSP, Alexander Stewart MSP

Climate Justice

Attendees

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| 1. Liam McArthur MSP | 14. David Hope-Jones – SMP |
| 2. Alexander Stewart MSP | 15. Brian Kerr – The Soko Fund |
| 3. Linda Fabiani MSP | 16. Sarah Knight – 2050 Climate Group |
| 4. Andy Wightman MSP | 17. Lorna McDonald – Tearfund |
| 5. Stuart McMillan MSP | 18. Ellie Murtagh – 2050 Climate Group |
| 6. Vincent Moyo – Tearfund Malawi | 19. Joyce Nicoll – IDI MMF |
| 7. Gillian Wilson – Community Energy Scotland | 20. Grace O'Donovan – SMP |
| 8. Evie Murray – Leith Community Crops in Pots | 21. Victoria Pinion – LTSI |
| 9. John Anthony Andrew – EMMS International | 22. Sofia Pira – The Alliance |
| 10. Charlie Bevan – Tearfund | 23. Colin Reilly – University of Glasgow |
| 11. Damien Frame – University of Strathclyde | 24. Francesca Roberts – RCSED |
| 12. Jane Forster – Balerno Fairtrade Village Group | 25. Paul Shaw – Geo Vision |
| 13. Bob Garrow – RS Garrow | 26. Ben Wilson – SCIAF |
| | 27. Simeon Wilton |
| | 28. Ruth Wolstenholme – Sniffer |
| | 29. Kathy Wright – SMP |

Apologies

Elaine Smith MSP	Denis Robson
Christine McKelvie MSP	Peter West
David Stevenson	Gary Brough
Kevin Simpson	

1. Welcome, apologies and minutes of the last meeting

Liam McArthur MSP was due to chair the meeting but unfortunately was held up at another engagement. Co-Convenor Alexander Stewart MSP stepped in and welcomed everyone to the meeting in the Scottish Parliament.

2. Gillian Wilson, Community Energy Scotland

Gillian introduced Community Energy Scotland's Climate Justice Innovation Funded Project (CJIF). The aim of the Scottish Government's CJIF is to support communities suffering from climate injustice in new innovative ways in the areas of water, energy and agriculture. The current funding round is open until the 29th June with £100,000 available over three years. Information can be found on the Corra Foundation [website](#).

Community Energy Scotland (CES) is an umbrella organisation of 400 organisations. Community Energy Malawi (CEM) is their sister network, and both have a vision to work with communities to enable them to own and control their own renewable resources and to generate economic benefit from that and generate income.

In remote rural areas of Malawi, many are not on the electricity grid and need access for both domestic and economic purposes. In the past, there have been grid developments in Malawi, however once capital has been provided, it can be hard to sustain. Many grids suffer from the lack of a strong business model, a lack of good repair and maintenance, and the ability to sustain technicalities. This project is working alongside another (UNDP) funded project to develop a solar mini grid of 80KWatts in four villages in Western Malawi. The mini grid will provide 250 domestic households and businesses electricity. The CJIF fund is tackling the idea of a sustainable business model with three main outcomes: 1) to make sure that the 250 households know how to operate and get connected (through tariffs and a community energy committee that manages tariff collection and the running of the mini grid), 2) to enable the electricity generated to be used by businesses, including irrigation clubs and maize milling units, etc., 3) to develop a tested financial management model which can be shared with other organisations in Malawi.

In the four villages, there are three community representatives who work collectively, 12 local entrepreneurs (including five women running mini-businesses) who sell solar equipment, 20 technicians (five from each village, and who are also the local entrepreneurs), and a village committee in each village. The technicians will be the first point of contact for customers, inclusive of minor repairs and connections for new customers. They will be backed up by an annual maintenance contract from CEM in a long-term maintenance model.

The project, which started in November, has been running for approximately 6-7 months thus far and will be doing so for another few years. Development of the UNDP funded mini grid has been delayed as it has a thorough procurement system and it has also been a rainy season which provides practical challenges. The grid will be installed in July, and detailed training will follow in the coming months.

Questions and discussion for Gillian Wilson, CES

Q: What criteria do you use for selecting the 250 households that receive electricity?

Gillian explained that the mini grid would not cover all areas of the villages. There will also be different tariffs to make it as affordable as possible, but people will need to be able to afford to connect. The costs include long-term maintenance, the business model of the grid, the running of the tariff system and staffing, and are not limited to the direct cost of provision of energy. Most of the capex is covered by the UNDP but the grid wants to generate some income to invest in the future of the mini grid as well. There is a three-tier tariff system: 1) for those who can pay the full tariff and the capex connection fee from the beginning, 2) for those who need the entire capex to be spread across a number of years, and 3) for those in between.

Q: Is a three year timeframe a realistic timeframe and will you be looking to come back for further funding either from CJIF or UNDP?

Gillian noted that prior to the start of the project, there was financial modeling for the business plan and that the timeline depended on when it was possible to break even. This is dependent on having enough customers who can pay the tariffs, if there are businesses who can pay a slightly higher fee, and whether business engagement is secured.

Q: What sort of sustainable energy will the grid be based on? Who is responsible for the financial flows? Who looks after the money once it is collected?

Gillian explained that it is all solar powered. The grant money is managed by CES but tariffs are managed by the village committees. There are regulatory rules, which require the tariffs to be proposed and to be sent to MARAP (the regulatory authority) in Malawi, where they accredit that there is technical and financial oversight. Training the 12 representatives in the villages ensures that they are responsible for collecting the tariffs and reporting to the community about the money. Eventually, they would register themselves as a constituted legal body by the end of the project. The structure will be owned by CEM as the asset manager, but the financial business model will be the village committee as a community owned mini-grid.

3. Evie Murray, Leith Community Crops in Pots

Evie thanked attendees for the opportunity to address the CPG, and introduced Leith Community Crops in Pots (LCCIP) as an organisation that is open to global issues as a charity, not just to issues in Leith. The issues are interconnected across the global sphere. Their partners, Living Trees of Livingstonia in Malawi and Thrive Scotland, bring complementary players across the globe to support problems in a united effort. LCCIP is a charity that is also in support of foster children. Living in densely populated areas such as Leith, the mental and emotional wellbeing and education of children in care would be improved from an outdoors lifestyle within Leith's urban environment. Growing food and encouraging children to be outside has benefits for children and adults alike, which develops the community. A combination of an awareness of the effects of climate change as well as the monopoly on food held by supermarkets is also what inspired LCCIP, which champions food sovereignty and building knowledge and skills that help the environment.

The project started in November with a visit from Thrive Scotland and LCCIP to Rumpfi, Malawi to discuss their terms of reference, which facilitated a base line survey to gather information on 21 schools working in Malawi. In 2017, LCCIP became one of the partners in a three year project operating across these 21 schools alongside Thrive Scotland and Living Trees of Livingstonia, which aims to improve the environment, reduce poverty and increase school attendance through School Orchard Committees. The locally-owned Committees establish orchards, sell produce and channel profits into improving their schools, which has been very successful. There were five tree nurseries in Malawi, and there are now 13 with eight more on the way despite the rainy season. The schools were provided with seeds and fertilizer to meet their school breakfast needs, which was shown in the survey as being a priority need. An Environmental Management Lecturer from the University of Livingstonia is monitoring the project, and promoting the growing of chilli and paprika, and the use of low-fuel stoves for schools to cook the school breakfasts.

LCCIP also aims to connect Malawi with Leith, and illustrate how climate change affects different places. They are currently looking at solar irrigation for the 21 schools. 30% of resources are allocated to cash crops, 30% for the school breakfasts, and 40% to tree replanting and reforestation. The greater mission is to produce mentally and physically healthy children in both hemispheres but also global citizens.

Liam McArthur arrived and apologised for being delayed. Liam took over from Alexander Stewart as chair for the meeting.

4. Vincent Moyo, Country Director of Tearfund Malawi

Vincent thanked everyone for the opportunity to share, and introduced Tearfund as a Christian charity working in more than 50 countries since 1968, working through local partners in both development work and emergency response. Tearfund has been working in Malawi since 2003 in areas of emergency response, development, livelihoods and food security. In Malawi, there are 10 projects which are spread across the three regions of Malawi. Tearfund Malawi has been receiving support from the Scottish Government since 2005 on project activities surrounding food security, livelihoods, the environment and economic sustainability, wars, climate justice and youth empowerment. Vincent shared details of two projects.

- 1) The Khwamba Sustainable Livelihoods Improvement Project started in 2015. The aim of the project is to reduce poverty by empowering households through agricultural development and livelihood improvement. The main objectives are to increase production and crops at household level, to help communities manage natural resources in response to climate change, and to increase economic income at household level. Drought and rains due to climate change, and increasing population pressure (now averaging 17.5 million) pose challenges. The production of tobacco is a main factor in deforestation, but Tearfund Malawi is promoting the production of legumes as a lasting alternative to tobacco. Tearfund Malawi also seeks to increase the economic output of people at household level through enhanced entrepreneur skills, access to loans, business management skills and self-help groups based on common interest at community level. There are also

hidden successes of the project, including reduced gender-based violence because of the women's involvement in self-help groups which are economically empowering.

- 2) The army worm is posing a real challenge, and Tearfund Malawi is working with researchers from Nwanga and the University of Livingstonia to study whether the army worm can be eliminated by using nitro-based chemicals. This project is in its first year, but crops are improving. This project is funded through the CJIF.

Vincent ended his presentation by thanking the Scottish Government for being a forerunner for climate change through the CJIF. He noted that the First Minister had said in 2017 that Scotland had a moral obligation to tackle climate change and the climate bill is intended to reduce emissions. Climate justice is an issue in Malawi and all around the world. Vincent noted that as Scotland is a leader in climate justice, Tearfund as a member of Stop Climate Chaos is asking for the Minister to commit to a target of 100% emissions reductions by 2050.

5. Any Other Business

Liam McArthur concluded the presentations and asked, due to time constraints, for questions of the two remaining speakers to be concluded during the networking time of the meeting. Liam then introduced David Hope-Jones to address any other business to the CPG. It was noted that the CJIF is currently open until the end of the month (29th June), and that the SMP is available to impartially support applications. David also noted that on the 16th June, the SMP has an upcoming Faith Links Conference which will bring together members of all faith communities and that all are welcome to attend.

David also reminded attendees that since the last meeting of the CPG, the SMP welcomed the President of Malawi. On the last day of his visit, he gave an address at the Scottish Parliament and the CPG group helped to co-host a reception, with each co-convenor meeting the President. David asked MSPs to reflect on the Presidential visit.

Liam McArthur noted that it was a resounding success and the reception following the address was particularly moving to see people engaging with the President. Liam did address the fact that there was no official recording of the President's address as it was not considered official Parliamentary business. He stated that, in future, steps will be taken to record this even when it is not an official report.

Linda Fabiani in her role as Deputy Presiding Officer stated that it was a delight to spend time with the President and his entourage. She noted that there was a great warmth and that the President was very forthright in speaking about Malawi and his plans for the future, as well as about the press in Malawi. This resonated strongly in Scotland with Parliamentarians who deal with the press here. Linda mentioned that she hopes the relationship between parliamentary civil servants in Scotland and Malawi will continue through shared learning and good work.

David concluded the business by inviting attendees to attend the next CPG meeting in September, which will encompass the SMP AGM. Dates of the next CPG meetings will be

agreed; they will take place in September, November, March and May. The CPG conveners are currently taking suggestions for their themes.

6. Apologies and minutes of the last meeting

Apologies were presented and the minutes were approved from the previous CPG meeting in March: proposed by Colin Reilly and seconded by Ben Wilson.

Liam McArthur thanked everyone for attending, and welcomed attendees to stay and network over Gin & Tonics.