

Minutes

Annual General Meeting of the APPG on Limits to Growth

Thursday 29th April 2021; via Zoom

Attendance

Members: Caroline Lucas MP, Clive Lewis MP, Deidre Brock MP, Claire Hanna MP, Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle, Danny Kruger MP. From members' offices: Sunny Singh (Office of Steven Bonnar MP), Iain Dow (Office of Lisa Cameron MP), Hayden Banks (Office of Barry Gardiner MP) and Laura MacKenzie (Office of Caroline Lucas MP). From the Secretariat (CUSP): Prof Tim Jackson, Christine Corlet Walker, Dr Richard Douglas, Linda Gessner, Catherine Hunt.

Summary

After private Group business, including the electing of officers, the group was joined by experts on the use of alternative economic models and metrics to define, measure, and deliver sustainable prosperity. Guest speakers were Prof Henrietta Moore, Director of the UCL's Institute for Global Prosperity, who presented the [Rebuilding Prosperity report](#) and recent work on the UK's first citizen-led Prosperity Index, and Christine Corlet Walker from the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity, who set this index in the context of broader frameworks for measuring prosperity and a previous [APPG briefing](#).

Election of Officers

The following members were unanimously voted as officers of the group:

- Caroline Lucas MP – Chair
- Clive Lewis MP – Vice-chair
- Barry Gardiner MP (in absentia) – Officer
- Lisa Cameron MP (in absentia) – Officer
- Peter Bottomley MP (in absentia) – Officer
- Claire Tyler, Baroness Tyler of Enfield (in absentia) – Officer

Report on previous events and activities

Caroline Lucas MP

- [\[1\] July 2020 | A post-growth recovery?—APPG letter to the Chancellor](#)
The APPG wrote to the Chancellor Rishi Sunak making a number of recommendations for a green recovery including: the adoption of new measures of societal wellbeing to replace GDP as a measure of progress; a commitment to join the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) partnership; the full integration of wellbeing measures into central and local government decision-making processes, and in particular into the Treasury Green Book; and the urgent development of a precautionary 'post growth' strategy for the UK.
Online at: <https://limits2growth.org.uk/publication/letters/a-postgrowth-recovery-appg-letter-to-the-chancellor-7-july-2020/>
- [\[1\] October 2020 | Private policy briefing on funding the economic recovery](#)
Private meeting for MPs and Peers, with Stephanie Kelton, a former member of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisors, discussing her seminal book *The Deficit Myth*; Dr Joshua Ryan-Collins, Senior Research Fellow in economics and finance from UCL's Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose; and Prof Tim Jackson, Director of the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity at the University of Surrey.

- [1](#) February 2021 | A Budget for a Green Recovery— Expert Panel, followed by letter to Treasury

Ahead of the Budget on 3rd March 2021, this meeting—co-hosted with the APPG on the Green New Deal—explored options available to the Chancellor to deliver a green recovery. The session was chaired by Caroline Lucas MP and Clive Lewis MP. Guest speakers were: Lord Adair Turner, Energy Transitions Commission; Miatta Fahnbulleh, New Economics Foundation; Robert Palmer, Tax Justice UK; Dr Suzy Morrissey, Wellbeing Economy Alliance, New Zealand & former Policy and Engagement Lead for the Living Standards Framework, NZ Treasury.

Recording online at: <https://limits2growth.org.uk/events/budget-green-recovery/>

The output from the meeting was a letter to the Chancellor from members from both APPGs, detailing priorities for the upcoming Budget: 1) a focus on stimulating the green economy with investments, rather than consolidating accounts; 2) investment in the creation of good, well-paid, jobs that also advance progress towards the UK's climate and nature goals; 3) build tax around a green and fair recovery; 4) update the Bank of England's mandate on climate; 5) judge the success of the recovery not by GDP, but on the extent to which it enhances the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and the environment. The APPG noted that the Budget announcements did indeed include an update of the Bank of England's to 'reflect the importance of environmental sustainability & the transition to net-zero'.

Letter online at: <https://limits2growth.org.uk/publication/letters/budget2021-letter/>

- [1](#) April 2021 | Shift to a Wellbeing Economy—Campaign Launch for the Wellbeing Economy Petition

This public webinar marked the launch of a new parliamentary petition, calling on the Government to shift to a Wellbeing Economy. Co-hosted with CUSP, the Wellbeing Economy Alliance and Wellbeing Economics Brighton, the event was chaired by Caroline Lucas MP and speakers were Clive Lewis MP, petition creator Laura Sharples, Beth Stratford, and Dr Katherine Trebeck.

Event online at: <https://limits2growth.org.uk/events/wellbeingeconomypetition/>

The petition is live until 26 September 2021:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/580646>

Report on Current and Future Work

Prof Tim Jackson

The group secretariat (CUSP) has successfully been awarded additional funding from the Laudes Foundation to support the APPG work until the end of November. This funding is to be used to further develop the APPG's agenda, bringing post-growth research into policy. It allows substantial work with additional time for a researcher within Caroline Lucas's office and three CUSP researchers to deepen their work on the project. With increased capacity, the APPG secretariat can be more proactive and reactive in supporting members in debates and other parliamentary activity relevant to the APPG agenda.

The project work will be in two tranches, the first looking at the question of growth dependency – how to ensure the continuation of social welfare when economic performance is not carried by growth of GDP. A report will be launched prior to summer recess.

The second is based on government debt, finance, spend and the money flow to society – particularly relevant to Treasury decisions. The intention is to create a resource for parliamentarians. A framework report will be launched after the summer recess.

Discussion

- Legislative work – scope for the APPG to support parliamentarians who want to take forward the limits to growth agenda via amendments e.g. to the Finance bill or the Environment Bill and tbc other legislation announced in the forthcoming Queen’s Speech
- Friction in argumentation has been noted between the GND and post-growth agenda: Investments in green sector works as a growth stimulus, how does this relate to the post-growth framework? One clue lies in long term vs short term investment – short term increases GDP but where it goes affects long term. Should not be investing in carbon heavy business but in (eg) the healthcare system, i.e. focusing not on increasing productivity but wellbeing. It was suggested that the APPG explores the viability of an event or other activities to tackle the compatibility, overlaps and differences in the concepts—to bring these two positions of the debate on the GND together. It was noted that Tim Jackson’s [Prosperity without Growth](#) book has a section dedicated to this question.
- Social innovation identified as another potential focus of work for the APPG– structure of economy to fit people living within it. E.g. 4 day working week.
- On UCL’s Rebuilding Prosperity [report](#), the APPG agreed to pick up some of the proposals directed at the Cabinet Office by writing to Michael Gove - a letter will be circulated to members shortly.
- It was suggested that a briefing focusing on the learnings from the NZ Living Standards Framework could be beneficial; given that it is in practice since a little while now. Making use of the connectivity across the globe, inviting someone from NZ Treasury could be beneficial for the group.
- It was agreed that the overarching challenge right now is the response to COVID and that the ‘recovery’ should not re-enforce the problems with the economic system that existed before the pandemic. The APPG must not waste this moment for change.

For enquiries please email appg@limits2growth.org.uk.