**The SOSE Spotlight podcast**

**Series 1, Episode 1 transcription**

**Host – Kenny Paterson**

Hello and welcome to the SOSE Spotlight podcast.

Wherever you are in Dumfries and Galloway, the Scottish Borders are beyond. If you're a business entrepreneur, community enterprise or aspiring to be one, this is for you. We're South of Scotland Enterprise and we're all about helping people in the South of Scotland to thrive, grow and fulfil your best potential. Today's topic is net zero. What is it?

Why is it critical for you and your business? Why now? What can you do? And how can South of Scotland enterprise help?

I'm Kenny Paterson and with me today as part of Scotland's climate week is Martin Valenti, director of Net Zero Natural Capital and entrepreneurship at SOSE. Martin is an award-winning sustainability practitioner with extensive experience of innovation and strategic business engagement. Hello and welcome to the SOSE spotlight. Martin.

**Guest – Martin Valenti, SOSE Director of Net Zero, Natural Capital and Entrepreneurship**

Hi Kenny, it's great to be here.

**Kenny**

Great. Thanks very much. So we're gonna start by talking about Scotland's climate week, which is this week. Can you just give us a little bit of information about what it is and why it's so important?

**Martin**

Sure, Kenny Scotland's climate week has been in place for almost a decade now.

And it involves communities and organisations from across Scotland coming together to celebrate and encourage climate action. And this year people are being asked to share their stories for change using the hashtag Scott Climate Week to help spark new ideas and inspire others and each other to act now so that we can reach net zero as quickly as Possible.

Kenny

And there's a lot more information about Scotland's climate week on the Net Zero Nation website. So we would encourage all businesses and communities across the South to have a look on there lots of information and practical tips. But you're talking about net zero there and here in Scotland, we've obviously we're all working towards a just transition to net zero by 2045.

Kind of phrase we hear a lot, but can you tell us what that actually mean?

**Martin**

Certainly. So I just transition means many things to many people, but just to be clear, this is about ensuring that as we aim to reduce our emissions by 2045 and respond to the change in climate that that journey of transition is fair, that it creates a better future for everyone. And regardless of where they live and what they do and who they are.

And the really Important one thing I think we should point out is that Scotland as a nation has done really well in the past and we punch well above our weight on the global stage and our efforts to cut our emissions in the decade from 2009 to 2019, we Scotland cut our emissions faster than any developed nation in the G20.

And it's important because very often we're told that cutting emissions goes against economic growth in the purest sense, and it can deter inward investment.00:02:50 Speaker 2

but that is just not true - and as it happens its exactly our desire to be a global leader in net Zero that has helped us remain an attractive place for investors. But we can't and must not be complacent because the hard miles are yet to come, and it's certainly going to be more challenging looking to transition sectors like the construction and agriculture and transport sectors. So on the net Zero point, we know that Scotland produces and emits about 40 million tonnes annually into the atmosphere.

So to become net zero by 2045, we need to get the balance between the amount of greenhouse gases produced into the atmosphere. It can be achieved through a combination of emission reduction and emission removal.

Let me try to explain briefly why this is so important – we are in a twin climate and nature crisis and time is running out to make the transition to net zero. The vast majority of scientific advice is that we realistically are now in the decade of delivery and the big changes that must happen have to happen right now.

So time is against us which is why this is the single greatest threat to our continued way of life on this planet but it presents us with the greatest opportunity to build a new exciting green and fair economy that delivers for our people, our planet and our pockets.

**Kenny**

That's great, Martin. I think that explanation really helps crystallise what we need to do. In the South of Scotland itself, though, we've got a very ambitious target of becoming the first net zero region in the UK. What does that mean in practical terms?

**Martin Valenti**

Our Net Zero ambitions in the South are based on the pioneering spirit we have here, and is detailed in the South of Scotland Net Zero Inward Investment Guide.

We believe we can become the first Net Zero region in the UK due to several reasons:

• We are a renewable powerhouse, generating over 15 per cent of all of Scotland’s renewable electricity. It makes us an ideal location for offshore an onshore wind, community-based renewable heat schemes and hydrogen storage facilities

• Our Natural Capital – we have an abundance of natural resources which has led the South to becoming the Natural Capital Innovation Zone for Scotland. This in turn means we have an identity which can help us support local businesses and attract new ones to come to our fantastic region

• We also have talent and skills to support our Net Zero ambition, including excellent colleges and universities who can support the development of green skills needed for the economy of the future

**Kenny**

In terms of how we get there, what do you think it will take for the South to reach net zero?

**Martin**

Well, one thing we know for sure, Kenny, is we can't do it alone is that we have to work closely with our partners.

We are fortunate to have such strong leadership via our Regional economic Partnership.

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP) is the forum that brings together a wide range of expertise and sets the direction of the regional economy across Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders.

The Partnership involves a series and I would say probably one of the most productive and visionary REP’s active today in the UK.

Our key REP partners have all signed up to the mantra of a green, fair and flourishing economic future for the South of Scotland and its very exciting to be part of the REP to help unlock economic and business opportunities.

**Kenny**

You talk there about the importance of partnership, but SOSE itself, we're really want to lead the way and on one of the ways we're trying to support businesses to take action is through the net 0 accelerator fund. Can you tell us a bit more about this fund and some of the innovative businesses that we've supported through it so far?

**Martin**

So the main reason for creating the fund was to encourage businesses and enterprise and communities to take that leap of faith, to jump into the net zero opportunity with both feet, with SOSE side by side.

It certainly generated significant interest and I can tell you about a couple of these, Kenny, through maybe one or two examples.

The first one would be business in Newtown Stewart called Rowan Glen. Now we helped Rowan Glen with a little bit of money, but a lot of support and mentoring and tutoring to look at their process to see how they could be more sustainable, less reliant on HGV miles, and less relying on plastics and paper usage.

They leapt into the opportunity and as a consequence, Rowan Glen has been one of the most exciting things that we've worked on here.

Another business is PET UK based in Dumfries. Our idea was to help them develop their operational efficiency and sustainability and we supported one of the leading plastic processors in the UK to replace an inefficient transformer and pumps. Now that might not sound very exciting and very net zero, but net zero shouldn't be viewed as just cutting emissions. It's also an opportunity to improve productivity, which is exactly what's happened with PET UK. They now can reduce the risk of the plant shutting down and it removes over 100 tonnes of carbon dioxide and carbon emissions each year from the operation.

**Kenny**

Great. Thanks for that, Martin. The Rowan Glen story in particular, there's a lot more information on our website, but it's a really inspiring one, from where they've been to where they are now. So it's fantastic we've been able to help them.

Going back to Scotland’s climate week, the theme this year is around stories for change. And I just wondered, you've talked about a couple of stories there, but I wonder if you had a few more.

**Martin**

There is a business called Hutton Stone, and we work closely with Hutton Stone to help them realise an opportunity. We now know that there's a new UK Government and they recently called for one and a half million homes to be built across the UK in the next 5 years. Some people see that as a challenge. We see that as a major economic opportunity.

And this is an increase of up to 80,000 homes a year on top of the current levels. So it's potentially the biggest increase in social and affordable housing in a generation. So that for us and for Hutton stone it is a major economic and business opportunity.

The UK Government are also aiming for homes that increase climate resilience, promote nature recovery and will respect local history and character. So that raises the question what will these homes be built from? What are the local materials that are available and how do they provide durability and sustainability without breaking the bank?

I'm delighted to say because of the work we did with Hutton Stone they are now driving solutions to that very challenge and that opportunity and it's a great example of a South of Scotland business that sees the challenges of net zero as a sensational economic and business growth opportunity.

So I want the message to be the transition in net zero isn't just a means to an end, it's an opportunity to change how we do business and what business means in local community.

**Kenny**

Great. Thanks for that, Martin. My final question, if you're a business or a social enterprise or community group listening to this podcast and they want to play their part and align with net zero, what support can SOSE provide?

**Martin**

The support we could provide ranges from detailed 1 to 1, mentoring and coaching. We've got an entrepreneurship team working with businesses who haven't normally been given the right support to try and unlock the entrepreneurial spirit.

But we also support existing businesses, exploiting new and existing markets, such as hydrogen, for example, which is a really, really big economic opportunity and an environmental opportunity for Scotland and for the world.

The best piece of advice I think I could probably offer is come and speak to us. Let's have a chat. Let's see how we can discuss what it is that you're looking to do in your business, and how we can help work with you to unlock opportunities for you, for your business and for the region.

**Kenny**

Thank you Martin Valenti, for coming along today and sharing inspiring stories of what South of Scotland businesses and South of Scotland Enterprise are doing to reach Net Zero.

And if you are looking for support with a business idea or community project, 1-2-1 coaching, practical learning, or you’re interested in networking events across the South of Scotland, then please get in touch, and come and meet us.

Our website: south of scotland enterprise dot com

Our email address:

clienthub at sose dot scot

Or call us on 0300 304 8888. That’s 0300 304 8888.

We’d love your feedback, and please subscribe so you don’t miss our next episode.