

MEETING MINUTES

Cross Party Group on Germany

Wednesday, 18th January 2017, 5.30pm

TG.20/21

Next Meeting

Wednesday, 22nd March 2017, 5.30pm

TG.20/21

Attendees

Colin Beattie MSP, Scottish Parliament
Cameron Buchanan, former MSP
Manuela Calchini, VisitScotland
Fiona Doherty, Forth Ports
Annette Götzkes, Edinburgh University
Graeme Henderson, Scottish Parliament
Daniel Johnstone MSP, Scottish Parliament
Klaus Lohmann, German National Tourist Office
Ben Macpherson MSP, Scottish Parliament
Robert Mason, Forth Ports
Sigrid Rieuwerts, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
Elaine Smith MSP, Scottish Parliament
Barbara Strickland, German citizen
James Trolland, Ridrum International
Jens-Peter Voss, Consul General of Germany
Charles Wilson, German National Tourist Office

Apologies Eleoma Bodammer, Kirsten Herbst-Gray, Ross Thomson MSP, Petra Wend.

Colin Beattie (CBe) opened the meeting at 17.44.

The Group noted its condolences for those affected by recent terrorism acts, in particular at the Berlin Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016.

Topics Discussed:

1. Viability of Scotland-Germany ferry route

CBe welcomed Fiona Doherty (FD) and Robert Mason (RM) from Forth Ports to the meeting. FD and RM gave the group a presentation on the work of Forth Ports, focussing on topics including:

- The current situation with Scotland-Europe ferry routes
 - o at present there is only a service between Rosyth-Zeebrugge, which runs three times a week and takes 26 hours

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- The UK does not currently have any ferry routes to Germany; people generally travel to France, Belgium or Holland then drive to Germany
- The level of competition between routes and other forms of transport
- A brief history of post-2000 ferry routes from Scotland to Germany
 - Two routes have been tested to date but neither have proven viable
- The level of investment Forth Ports had recently made in its infrastructure
- The factors to take into consideration when considering a ferry route
 - Demand
 - Crossing time and speed
 - Seasonal fluctuations
 - Passenger experience
 - Economics for ferry operator
 - Cost of ship
 - Fuel consumption
 - The negative effects of the EU Sulphur Directive 2015
- The strength and recent upswing of the global and Scottish cruise ship markets
 - This past year saw orders for 73 ships, equalling \$50bn
 - Passenger, ship numbers and spend had doubled in seven years

CBe asked why Rosyth was used as the main port. FD said that it was easily accessible, didn't compete with Newcastle and was not a container port (unlike Grangemouth).

CBe queried what proportion of the UK cruise ship market Scotland represented. FD stated it was pretty low; RD said roughly 650,000 passengers compared with 1.6 million in Southampton, but that Scottish passengers increased by 35% in the past year.

The Group then discussed the strength of the 'passenger experience', in particular the steps that are and can be taken to ensure passengers have a welcoming journey. RM spoke of how 'destination development' work, such as arranging a St Andrews golfing tour, is important to passengers.

RM mentioned the significant economic value of the market, with 2017 seeing an estimated £72m in passenger direct spend. Manuela Calchini (MC) noted that a cruise ship had come in to Edinburgh for Hogmanay, and RM said that the cruise ship season was extending from March to December.

Barbara Strickland (BS) asked if there was an average age for passengers and if the appeal was greater for older people. RM replied that there generally wasn't an average age and that different ships appealed to different people, even among the same age group. RM also noted that income can be ring-fenced due to passenger bookings being taken 18 months in advance of a journey. The Group then discussed the procedures for loading and unloading passengers and supplies when in dock.

Jens-Peter Voss (JPV) spoke of the high levels of interest in Scotland from the German tourist market and of the difficulties presented by the current travelling options. MC expanded on this theme, noting that 2 in 5 Germans come to Scotland

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via a ferry route to England although not everyone would want to drive. James Trolland (JT) thought that there would be potential for Orkney to feature on a tourist ferry route.

Annette Götzkes (AG) asked if the potential extension of the Edinburgh Trams to Leith would benefit ferry routes. FD replied that this would provide more options for passengers, and RM commented that more travel options would allow for greater capacity. Sigrid Rieuwerts (SR) asked how long it would take a ferry to travel from Newcastle to Leith, and if this could provide a potential route. FD said it was a short hop but it relied on incremental benefits for ferry operators. RM stated that Newcastle to Dundee and London to Edinburgh provide better alternatives.

The Group thanked FD and RM for attending the meeting.

The Group then went on to discuss the tourist markets between Germany and the UK and the possibility of exploiting Newcastle's proximity to Edinburgh for a viable ferry route (even as a day trip). The Group agreed that, while a ferry route would be welcome, ultimately it would require interest from ferry operators and there does not appear to be much interest at present.

Political, cultural, economic update

The Group discussed the effects of Brexit on tourism. MC noted that the recent weak pound made the UK attractive to tourists and that UK nationals may choose to take their own holidays here, although the situation may change post-Brexit. CBe asked if Germany had seen much impact following on from the recent terrorism acts. Klaus Lohmann (KL) felt that there had not been much impact as the acts could have occurred in most countries.

The Group agreed to discuss Brexit in full at a separate meeting after Article 50 is invoked in March.

AOB

SR raised the issue of airlines like Ryanair and GermanWings seasonally cutting their flights in the winter, which affected the travel plans of her students.

ACTION POINT – Manuela Calchini and Klaus Lohmann to provide relevant statistics to Graeme Henderson for Group dissemination

CBe asked the Group to email any suggested future topics to Graeme Henderson.

The Group agreed to bring forward the proposed dates of the meetings in September and November.

JPV thanked CBe for the re-institution of the CPG.

CBe closed the meeting at 7.18pm.