

**Scottish Parliament**  
**Cross Party Group on China**  
**Tuesday 24 March 2015**  
***DRAFT MINUTES***

**PRESENT**

**Convener**

**Graham Pearson MSP**

**MSPs**

**Chic Brodie MSP**

**Hanzala Malik MSP**

**Speaker**

**Alistair Michie, Advisor, FEAC, State Administration of Foreign Experts Advisory Committee; Group Business and Government Advisor NICG**

**Members**

**Margaret Alcorn, Convener of SELMAS**

**Nigel Archdale, Anthony Millard Consulting, ESMS**

**Deborah Birrell, Senior Deputy Rector, The Edinburgh Academy**

**James Brodie, General Manager and Business Adviser, CBBC Scotland**

**Dr Roger Collins, Honorary Fellow, The University of Edinburgh**

**Renxuan Dai, Scottish Chinese Entrepreneurs Association**

**Professor Tariq Durrani, OBE FRSE FREng, VP (International), Royal Society of Edinburgh**

**Professor Barbara Fennell-Clark, Director, Confucius Institute of the University of Aberdeen**

**Fhiona Fisher, Director, Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools (CISS) at the University of Strathclyde**

**Sheila Forbes, SIPRA, University of Strathclyde**

**Linda Fu, International Client Relations Director, HBJ Gateley**

**Professor Natascha Gentz, Chair of Chinese, Dean International (China), Director of the Confucius Institute for Scotland at the University of Edinburgh**

**Professor Ian Gow OBE, Director of the Confucius Institute of the University of Glasgow**

**Katy Gow, Past President, Royal Asiatic Society China**

**Roddy Gow OBE, Chairman and Founder, Asia Scotland Institute**

**Dr Michael Xin Guo, Lecturer in Accounting and Finance, School of Business and Enterprise, University of the West of Scotland; Scottish Association of Chinese Entrepreneurs**

**Meryl James, Professional Development Officer, Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools (CISS) at the University of Strathclyde**

**Dr Richard Jin, Confucius Institute for Scotland, University of Edinburgh**

**Eleana Kazakeou, Parliamentary Researcher, Office of Jim Hume, MSP**

**Fan Lin, Deputy Director, Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools (CISS) at the University of Strathclyde**

**Lei Liu, Scottish Chinese Entrepreneurs Association**

**Catriona Llanwarne, Senior Solicitor, Burness Paull LLP**

**Lindesay Low, Legal Advisor, Scotch Whisky Association**

**Margie Ogilvy-Stuart, Crown + Stone Ltd**

**Ping Ma, Chinese Director, Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools (CISS) at the University of Strathclyde**

**Simon Macaulay, SCEN Field Worker and Member of SCEN Executive Committee**

**Brian McLeish, Scottish Enterprise, Co-ordinator of CPG Engagement**

**Shaun McPhee, Digital Consultant, Royal Society for Asian Affairs**

**Kam Leung Ng (Tommy), Life Time Honourable President of the Wu Clan's Association UK**

**Wing-Sie Ng, Individual Interpreter**

**Wing-Yan Ng MSYP, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (Edinburgh Central), SCEN Youth Committee**

**Neil Phillips, Positive Solutions, Glasgow**

**Sandie Robb, Senior Education Officer, RZSS**

**Ken Robinson, Howden Group**

**Dayna Rodger, University of the West of Scotland**

**Douglas Scott, Senior Policy Adviser, Scottish Borders Council**

**Dr Jim Scott, University of Dundee, SCSSA Facilitator, SCEN Executive Committee**

**Edward Tsang, AACCEE**

**David Valentine MBE, Chairman and Managing Director, Valentine International Business Connections LLP**

**Margaret Valentine, Valentine International Business Connections LLP**

**Bobby Wang, Scottish Chinese Entrepreneurs Association**

**Lei Wang, Scottish Chinese Entrepreneurs Association**

**Dr. Nini Yang, Director of China Office in Beijing, The University of Edinburgh**

**Wang Yuchen, PhD researcher on the ethnography of learning disabled children's lives in urban Shanghai, University of Edinburgh**

**Jean J. Ye, J.J.Y International**

**Secretary**

**Dr Judith McClure CBE**

## **1 Welcome and introduction from the Convener, Graeme Pearson MSP**

The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked them for their attendance, and saluted the big Agenda.

## **2 Apologies**

**Jackie Baillie MSP**

**Claudia Beamish MSP**

Thompson Chau, Modern History and Philosophy Student, University of St Andrews

Richard Clason, Operations Manager, G7 Consultants

Robert Dalzell, North Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Jim Dixon, West Lothian Council

Aaron Rhys Doidge MSYP, East Lothian and International Relations

Professor Jane Duckett, Director, The Scottish Centre for China Research, University of Glasgow

Yuwen Fortune, The Edinburgh Academy

John Fulton, Partner at Anderson Strathern LLP

Cathy Gu, Barclays, Co-Director, Young Chinese Professionals

Jessica Guo, CEO EEB Consultancy Ltd; Trustee AACCEE

Ewan Hastings MInstF (Dip), Fundraising Manager, Eric Liddell Centre

Professor Gill Hogg, Deputy Principal External Affairs, Heriot-Watt University

Jan Hulme, University Secretary and Vice Principal Governance, Glasgow Caledonian University

Alick Kitchin, Joint Head of Edinburgh Business School, Heriot-Watt University

Peter Kwok, Co-Director, Young Chinese Professionals

Councillor Eoghann MacColl, East Ayrshire Council

Jim McColm, Sounding board at Panda Modium China / Scotland Solutions, Ayr

Councillor Maureen McKay, East Ayrshire Council

Judith McKerrecher, Professional Development Officer, CISS

Jack Nissan, Tinderbox Project

Fiona Pate HMle, former National Leadership and Languages Specialist at Education Scotland

Shilong Qu, Deputy Chairman, AACCEE

Rory Swinson Reid, Project Coordinator at Collaborate

Ruth Taylor, Corporate Engagement Assistant, First State Investments (UK)

James Trolland, Ridrum International

Angus Tulloch, Manager of Asia Pacific Fund, First State Investments

Oliver Wessely, PG student, University of Glasgow, International Business

Alan Williamson, Headteacher, Lasswade High School, Midlothian

### 3 **Minutes of the Meeting of 29 January 2015**

The Minutes were approved.

### 4 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### 5 **China: Accelerating Scotland's Advantage: A Presentation by Alistair Michie**

The Convener welcomed the principal speaker: Alistair Michie, Advisor, FEAC, State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs, Group Business and Government Advisor NICG. The Convener said that Mr Michie had a trio of attributes in addressing the Group: he spent a great deal of his time in China, he had a great understanding of complex relationships, and his heart and soul were in Pittenweem. He congratulated Mr Michie on the Chinese Government's award in 2013 of the 'Friendship Award' Medal, and explained that this is the supreme honour that the Chinese Government confers upon foreign experts who have made outstanding contributions to China

*A short biography of Mr Michie is appended to this Agenda.*

Alistair Michie thanked the Convener for his introduction and said it was an honour to address the Group in the Scottish Parliament. He said he owes a great debt to Scotland, having been born in Aberdeen and educated at school in Edinburgh and at University in Glasgow: Scottish education had given him values, help to navigate through life and curiosity. As a result, he had worked in 28 of the 32 provinces of China for the last 22 years, in the footsteps of many Scots, thought unlike HSBC and Jardine Matheson he had not created a vast global business.

Mr Michie referred the Group to President Xi Jinping's distillation of his political theory into the Four Comprehensives, now engaging the media in China:

- Comprehensively build a moderately prosperous society
- Comprehensively deepen reform
- Comprehensively govern the nation according to law
- Comprehensively strictly govern the Party.

Mr Michie said that his own view of the developing relationship between China and Scotland was very exciting, because of Scotland's potential,

which in his view could even be accelerated. As a result, he proposed his own Four Comprehensives for Scotland:

### **Michie's Four Comprehensives for Scotland**

- **Culture**
- **Commitment**
- **Challenges**
- **Certainty**

#### **Culture**

Mr Michie referred to a long list of advantages for Scotland, in terms of its culture, creativity, its castles, golf courses and its whisky, its education, clean climate and history, its view of capitalism and the theories of Adam Smith, and the Scottish Renaissance and Enlightenment.

The University of Edinburgh was the first western institution to recruit students from China. Health pioneer Dr Huang Kuan graduated from Edinburgh's medical school in 1855. After returning to China he forged a distinguished medical career, introducing new forms Canton cholera epidemic of 1870. Mr Michie referred to Yan Fu, who first studied naval engineering at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich 1887-89. He is celebrated for his later translations, including Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and Herbert Spencer's *Study of Sociology*. Adam Smith's work in particular has had a great influence in China.

#### **Commitment**

Mr Michie went on to describe the importance of Scotland's commitment to China in recent times, going back to Donald Dewar and followed through by subsequent First Ministers: Henry McLeish, Jack McConnell, Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon. This, he said, was hugely important to the Chinese people and much superior to the approach in England, which was not integrated. He described the work of Judith McClure and SCEN, the Scotland China Education Network, as a case study in forging partnerships with key players nationally, linking primary and secondary schools and universities, the exam board, commerce and the Scottish Government. No other country had this model, which was so important because it was only through education that we can get rid of misunderstandings and develop effective relations.

## Challenges

Mr Michie said that the great challenges to the development of relations with China were a weak understanding and a mindset that our way is best. We were not learning how the Chinese think and the media were consistently negative: we are *walking into the future backwards*. As a result, SMEs were wary about doing business with China, young people were not sufficiently motivated to study Chinese at University and there were not sufficient experts, including in business. Few multinational companies have the right expertise in their Boards to advise their CEOs, especially in relation to the Chinese consumer: hence the problems of TESCO and Wal-Mart. In Mr Michie's view, Scotland had an advantage in the commitment of its government and its laying the foundations for the study of Chinese in its education system. It must seize its opportunities.

## Certainty

Mr Michie reminded the Group that business craves predictability and sustainability. So does the Chinese Government, because of its deep memories of recent pain that we cannot begin to understand in the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese are pragmatic and recognise that the UK is a global leader in many areas, such as the aerospace industry and new energy (where he cited the University of Strathclyde's work in energy engineering). It was vital to communicate commitment after the General Election in May.

The Convener thanked Mr Michie for his presentation and his emphasis on the exciting prospects for business. He invited questions.

- Neil Phillips thanked Mr Michie and said that the Group was strongly committed to Scotland's work in China. CBBC spoke of the importance of involvement in China's regional cities, a point emphasised to the Group by the previous Consul General, Mr Li Ruiyou and reiterated to the Group by the current Consul General, Mr Pan Xinchun. But the Scottish Government focused on Beijing and Shanghai. David Cameron, however, had visited Chengdu. Alistair Michie said that in his 22 years in China, he had visited only 28 provinces: it was a vast country and there were many different markets. It was important to spread risk and share resources: something emphasised at the CBBC meeting he had attended that afternoon, which had discussed the China Investment Corporation. Here in Scotland, it would be good if the financial sector put together a comparable structure to spread risk and to assist SMEs. The Scottish Government could be the catalyst, but the structure should be private.

- Chic Brodie MSP referred to the promising link between East Ayrshire and Dandong, whereby Glaisnock House, near Cumnock, has been sold to new Chinese owners, who plan to convert the impressive building into a centre to encourage the further development of business and cultural relations between Scotland and China. He asked whether it was likely that there would be further development of direct connectivity between Scotland and China. Alistair Michie agreed; more could be done, without question. In terms of practical solutions, it was essential that Scotland should make a bigger commitment to finding ways to support SMEs and of giving them the knowledge required to enter the Chinese market. At this afternoon's CBBC meeting, it was pointed out that the Chinese Government has been clear about its economy; yet its statements were dismissed by academics and politicians. But the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress Report is in fact the blueprint for the next ten years. Businesses should see the clear signals from the Chinese Government concerning the private sector, which represented 60% of GDP in China. There was a strong move to a mixed operation in the state-owned sector. These were the reasons to share knowledge and experience and to use all possible vehicles to spread the risk for SMEs.
- Roger Collins referred to the growing number of Chinese visitors to Scotland, contrasted with our limited efforts to increase our learning of Chinese literature, history and art. The important Ming exhibition in the National Museum of Scotland was relatively poorly attended. Now the Gallery of Asian Art at NMS was to be closed until 2018, and the Burrell Collection would be closed for next year. He asked whether we should not aim to enable Scots at all levels to understand more about Chinese culture. Alistair Michie agreed whole-heartedly. When he had gone to China, he knew nothing about 5,000 years of Chinese history from his school or university studies. Although there had been some improvement since then, it was deeply worrying that high-income countries in the West were so ignorant about China. He believed that Scotland was going faster and further than other countries; for instance, it led the world in the number of Confucius Institutes per head of the population. But there was much further to go.

## 6 Updates from Confucius Institute Directors

- **Professor Natascha Gentz**, Director of the Confucius Institute for Scotland, University of Edinburgh

Professor Gentz said that the Confucius Institute for Scotland was not specialist, but aimed to work in the three areas of Education, Business and Culture. It had been a busy year, the tenth anniversary of the foundation of Confucius Institutes worldwide. Her Institute had received another Award, the Pioneer Award: one of only two in Europe. Its expansion had been agreed: two new buildings would be added to the Abden House site, Making the Confucius Institute for Scotland at the University of Edinburgh a Model Institute. A new strategy was being discussed, one aspect of

which was to train new experts on China in Higher Education. She said that her Institute had strong links with its partner Fudan University in Shanghai, with CBBC and with the First Secretary for Scottish Affairs in the British Embassy in Beijing, John Somers. Its relations with Hanban were excellent, but there were challenges to its Confucius Institutes world-wide, evident now in media reporting.

➤ **Professor Ian Gow OBE**, Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Glasgow

Professor Gow said he still missed his many years in China. He had had just a month as Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Glasgow, which had been so well run by Professor Jane Duckett. It was still relatively local in its impact, but its numbers were increasing. A highlight had been a lecture by an outstanding novelist, whose visit had been shared with the Confucius Institute at Heriot-Watt University. He also worked with the University of Strathclyde in general and with the Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools. He believed that a step change was necessary and he was developing key performance indicators to that end. He was looking for challenge, after his experience in setting up China Studies at the Universities of Sheffield and Nottingham, and leading institutions in Ningbo and Shanghai. CISS was doing great work in schools: it was said that 20,000 children and young people in Scottish schools had some experience of Chinese learning. But there was a gap in the opportunities thereafter in Further and Higher Education. He also believed that learning the language alone was not enough; it should trigger more minor studies, and joint degrees. He said most strongly that we need a route for Chinese and Chinese Studies in Further and Higher Education.

➤ **Fan Lin**, Deputy Director of the Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools at the University of Strathclyde

Fan Lin said she was representing CISS, as Director Fhiona Fisher had been unable to attend the meeting. CISS had been given the award of Confucius Institute of 2014, as a result, she felt, of its work with the network of Confucius Hubs and with SCEN. CISS had a national strategy and its work would be extended by the opening of four new Hubs, in the Highlands, in Shetland, in Midlothian, and through the separation of the Ayrshire Hub. There were 29 exchange teachers sent by Hanban. CISS worked closely with the Tianjin Education Committee, which had offered a gap year experience for 12 Scottish students to study in China: this would be increased to 16 scholarships next session. CISS had also founded a Chinese Club for pupils from a deprived area. Relations with Hanban were excellent. Next session would see a teacher immersion course and a pupil immersion course in China with 34 Hanban exchange teachers and 9 staff in the CISS office.



- **Professor Barbara Fennell-Clark**, Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Aberdeen

Professor Fennell-Clark said that her Institute was new but very committed. There had been initial Visa problems, but in September the staff would be 6, with 8 exchange teachers from its partner Wuhan University. This would enable a wider range of classes, including language and business courses. At the moment 119 students attended each week, and that number was growing. Volunteers supported the work of 12 Primary Schools, helping class teachers to introduce Mandarin learning. The Scottish Opera project, based upon the Terracotta Warriors, had been a fantastic success was a great credit to the educational work of Scottish Opera. Six Headteachers had visited China; there were five new doctoral students researching China-related topics – sadly none of them were Scots.

- **The Secretary on behalf of Professor Gill Hogg**, Deputy Principal External Relations, Heriot-Watt University

The Secretary said that Professor Hogg was unable to attend the meeting; her apologies were noted. She said that the Confucius Institute for Business and Communication at Heriot-Watt University is shortlisting for the post of Director next week, with interviews planned for late April. Professor Fennell-Clark has agreed to be on the panel. So far the Confucius Institute has held a number of cultural events and its staff are teaching students of interpreting and translating. More events are planned and additional drop-in classes in September. The business side will be built up, once a Director has been appointed.

The Convener referred to recent articles in the press, which had suggested that Confucius Institutes acted as a mouthpiece for the Chinese Government and were used to deliver propaganda. He asked if he could be reassured that there is academic freedom in Scotland's Confucius Institutes and that no interference in that would be sanctioned. Professor Gentz said that academic freedom was in no way jeopardised and there had been no attempts to exert pressure or interfere. Professor Gow said that the University of Glasgow had just begun a manor seminar on the politics of Tibet. There was indeed no pressure from Hanban; Scottish Directors would not put up with it. Professor Fennell-Clark referred to the challenging work of Dr Martin Mills at the University of Aberdeen. Fan Lin from CISS said that its work in schools was to promote language, not politics; Hanban did not interfere and its teachers shared their experiences in the classroom.

Alistair Michie said that Hanban had an international Advisory Council, of which Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea, Principal of the University of Edinburgh, was a member. In view of international media controversy, he had himself advised Mme Xu Lin, the Director General of Hanban, that she needed a professional communications strategy. She had grown up in an

era of direct communication; the West needed persuasion. China needed to research attitudes, in the manner of high-income countries and multi-national companies, and to change its means of communication. Hanban should tell its story, and foreigners should do it. He advised the Group to send a polite but strong signal to Mme Xu Lin that she should consider, with professional advice, communications outside China, especially in the USA.

The Convener concluded that the Minutes of the Group would be placed on the Scottish Parliament's website. It had heard presentations from the leaders of Scotland's five Confucius Institutes. It could be that the media had simply picked up on controversies in the USA. He had been comforted by the Group's open discussion.

## 7 **Updates from Members**

- **Lindesay Low**, Legal Advisor, Scotch Whisky Association, on the recent visit he made with his Chief Executive to China and their view of the future of Scotch Whisky in China

Lindesay Low said that he had visited Beijing and Shanghai with his CEO and with Martin Bell. Sadly they had not reached the regions. The mood in relation to Scotch Whisky was subdued as a result of the anti-corruption drive. But the positive aspect of this was that it could now aim to reach a more egalitarian, normal market, not an aspect of a luxurious life style. They had had meetings with the Chinese Government concerning legal issues: his experience was that the Chinese took the need to protect intellectual property seriously, and were keen to learn from our system about the protection of products.

- **Shaun McPhee**, Digital Consultant, on the Royal Society for Asian Affairs

Shaun McPhee said that the Royal Society for Asian Affairs had been founded over a century ago and supported understanding and links with Asia, including of course China. It offered a journal, lectures and presentations. So far it operated largely in London, but a new start was being made in Edinburgh. Scholarship schemes enabled travel and work in Asia and RSAA would be working with SCEN to hold a Schools Day, to give young people a chance to engage with Asia.

Membership details: <http://rsaa.org.uk/membership/>

- **Wang Yuchen**, PhD Student at the University of Edinburgh, on her experience as a Chinese student in Scotland

*Good evening everyone. It is my great pleasure to join the group; many thanks to Dr Judith McClure for her warm invitation.*

*I am Yuchen. I am a PhD student in special and inclusive education. China also has interesting links with Scotland in this area, since the first modern school to accommodate children with disabilities in China was opened by a Scottish pastor in 1874. I have been living in Edinburgh for over three years and this is also my first time to be away from China. There are two things about Scotland that have amazed me. One is how people live together in a multicultural society and the other is how people live in harmony with nature. Looking back, the whole experience of being a student here has been enjoyable and life changing. It is a journey full of discoveries and pleasant encounters.*

*Indeed, it is not easy to do a postgraduate degree in an English-speaking country. It is intellectually, physically and emotionally challenging. I want to say that relationship is the starting point for learning, belongingness and participation to happen. I am very lucky to have my current supervisors, who have a great understanding of how to engage with international students. They believe in my competence and they care about me as a person. I am also grateful for having wonderful peers, who come from different parts of the world with diverse cultural, ethnic and faith background. We celebrated important moments together from Christmas, Eid to Spring Festival. We have learned so much from each other about what we shared in common.*

*Here I would also like to say a few words about what I wish could have made things better.*

*First, universities should provide learning support beyond language use. Many students feel confused about different educational expectations, such as how to take part in discussion and group-work, how to develop and exhibit critical thinking, and how to manage professional relationships with supervisors or tutors.*

*Second, students tend to feel unsure about their career prospects. For example, time for transition is often needed after graduation but the current Visa policy makes it much harder for students to achieve what they want in job hunting.*

*Third, students' voices need to be heard. Sometimes we may not know where to seek supports when we are in difficult situations. Listening to what students have to say will be helpful to identify barriers and dissolve stereotypes. Training should also be in place for staff to raise their cultural sensitivity, and discrimination should not be tolerated on campus.*

*To end with, I cannot possibly think of a better place that I could have lived in. I actively promote Chinese language and culture, and I hope I can contribute to knowledge exchange especially in education between Scotland and China. I am now also teaching Mandarin in a local school and helping to build up collaboration with a school in Shanghai. Chinese students have*

*so much to offer to Scotland. By enhancing Chinese students' experiences, the connection between two countries would surely be strengthened.*

The Convener thanked Wang Yuchen and welcomed her as a friend and member of our community.

- **Dr Jim Scott**, University of Dundee, on the Chinese Language statistics for Scottish Qualifications Authority examinations after appeals, session 2013-2014

Dr Jim Scott distributed his paper, ***An Analysis of Enrolment and Attainment in Chinese (and Other Languages)***; attached with these Minutes.

Dr Scott will be giving a lecture at Moray House School of Education on *The Governance of Modern Languages in Scotland* on 27 May at 3.00 pm. Here he wished to express his concern that although Higher figures were slightly up on 2014, those for Intermediate 2/National 5 were strikingly down. This would undoubtedly have an impact on the next stage. He said that Curriculum for Excellence had promised much and was commendable, but attainment in Modern Languages, and especially Chinese, had not improved, largely because of a move to fewer subjects in S4. He referred members to his statistics and arguments

The Convener said he was very grateful for Dr Scott's update. There was a great deal of information and thought was needed; as time was limited, he would leave questions for a future meeting. As an apolitical Group, the Convener said there were inevitable concerns over the fall in the number of students taking Chinese. He proposed writing to the Scottish Government to express the Group's concern and invite comments and a view of the implications. Dr Scott agreed that this was a most reasonable way forward. Professor Gow proposed that the Scottish Funding Council should receive a copy of the letter.

## 9 **Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting**

The Convener said that Chinese business interests in the West wished to feature in the Celebrations of the Chinese New Year in Glasgow in 2016. They were not looking for funding but for help to join the parade and to take part in cultural events. If this happens, participation would become annual. **The Convener invited members to support this initiative if they could.**

**The next meeting of the Cross Party Group on China will take place on Tuesday 9 June 2015, 6.00 – 7.30 pm (arrival by 5.45 pm) in the Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 3.**

**There will be a presentation by Dr Martin Mills and Dr Samantha May of the University of Aberdeen.** Dr Mills writes: *Dr May and I are presently beginning a research arc on China's environmental laws and their relationship to industries (factory building, mining, that kind of thing) in the wake of the substantial April decisions by the SCNPC. As before, our main angle would be to outline the principal features of changes that are occurring on the Chinese economic scene, and hope that would be of benefit to companies and policy-makers in the Group either working in China or thinking of heading that way.*

## **Appendix**

### **Alistair Michie, Advisor, FEAC, State Administration of Foreign Experts Advisory Committee, Business and Government Advisor NICG: A Short Biography**

In 2014 Alistair was appointed one of five Chief Advisors to the Chinese Government's Foreign Experts Advisory Committee (FEAC). In this role he leads on creating policy papers to advise the State Council and Premier Li Keqiang. In 2013 the Chinese Government awarded Alistair The 'Friendship Award' Medal. This is the supreme honour that the Chinese Government confers upon foreign experts who have made outstanding contributions to China.

Before developing a focus on China 21 years ago Alistair worked in the UK Parliament and later advised many multinational business leaders. Advising the CEO of Standard Chartered, Sir Malcolm Williamson, in 1993 led to two decades of experience working in almost all of the provinces and regions of China. It was during this time that Alistair led an initiative that created the Dragon's Ascent project. This brought together the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Needham Research Institute (NRI) at Cambridge University to create, at that time, the largest ever documentary television series about China. In 2002 Alistair was appointed the first Honorary Associate of the NRI at Cambridge University.

The focus of the work in China of Alistair has been strategic advice to build cross-cultural understanding between the world and China. This has led to a number of advisory roles. He became the first British national to be invited to brief the newly appointed Secretary General, Xi Jinping, in December 2012. Alistair is a senior consultant for Madam Xu Lin, Director of Hanban, which operates the global network of Confucius Institutes. The major advisory role of Alistair Michie is as Business and Government Advisor to NICG, which is a global leader on strategic counsel related to China.

Alistair was born in Aberdeen and was educated in Edinburgh and Glasgow. When in the UK he spends as much time as he can in the East Neuk of Fife.