

## CROSS PARTY GROUP (CPG) ON SCOTLAND'S UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

12.30-14.00 on Wednesday 6 March 2013, Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament

### Note of Meeting

#### Present:

Elizabeth Smith MSP	Convenor of the CPG on Scotland's Universities and Colleges
Neil Findlay MSP	Deputy Convenor of the CPG on Scotland's Universities and Colleges
Mr Colin Beattie MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mr Marco Biagi MSP	Scottish Parliament
Ms Joan McAlpine MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mr George Adam MSP	Scottish Parliament
Ms Annabel Ewing MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mrs Anne McTaggart MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mr Colin Keir MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mr Jim Eadie MSP	Scottish Parliament
Ms Emma Beeby	Colleges Scotland
Mr Peter Brady	Edinburgh Napier University
Ms Frances Christensen	The Confucius Institute for Scotland, University of Edinburgh
Ms Mandy Exley	Edinburgh College
Dr Barbara Fennell	University of Aberdeen
Prof Grant Jarvie	University of Edinburgh
Mr Coby Jones	Scottish Parliament
Mr John Henderson	Colleges Scotland
Miss Rebecca Lauer	Scottish Parliament
Prof Matthew MacIver	University of the Highlands and Islands
Mr Finlay MacCorquodale	Edinburgh Napier University
Dr Judith McClure	Scotland China Education Network (SCEN)
Mr Brian McLeish	Scottish Enterprise
Ms Olivia Salama	Scottish Parliament
Mr Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland
Mr Matthew Stewart	Scottish Parliament
Mr Colin Taylor	Scottish Parliament
Ms Catherine Thwaites	NUS Scotland
Mr James Wilson	Universities Scotland
Mr Shengchun Yao	City of Glasgow College
Mr Ahmed Yousaf	Remploy

#### Apologies:

Mr Peter Aitchison	University of Glasgow
Mr David Bass	Lead Scotland

Mr David Belsey	EIS Scotland
Mr John Burt	Angus College
Ms Sophia Goring	College Public Policy
Mr Russell Gunson	NUS Scotland
Ms Susannah Lane	Universities Scotland
Mr David Lott	Universities Scotland
Ms Alison McLure	Institute of Physics
Dr Nathalie Mather-L'huillier	Universities Scotland
Mr Stewart Maxwell MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mr Robin Parker	NUS Scotland
Ms Sue Pinder	James Watt College
Ms Jane Scott	Queen Margaret University
Ms Heather Sloan	Universities Scotland
Mr Ken Wimbor	EIS Scotland

## **Annual General Meeting**

### **1. Welcome and introduction from the Convenor**

The Convenor, Ms Smith MSP, welcomed everyone to the Group's tenth meeting and explained that there would be two parts to the meeting: first, the AGM; and second the topical meeting to discuss Scotland's educational links with China.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

### **3. Annual Return Form (AR1) / Summary of the Group's activities to date**

The Convenor explained two documents had been provided to the Group. Firstly, a summary spelling out what the Group has done since it was reconstituted in October 2011 as well as details of who has been attending and speaking at these meetings. Secondly, the official paperwork to be submitted to Parliament, the Annual Return Form (AR1) on which the Group must agree is an accurate record. The Convenor noted her thanks to Mr James Wilson for his help in preparing these papers. Professor MacIver moved that the Group was happy with the Annual Return Form (AR1), Professor Grant Jarvie seconded.

### **4. New CPG Best Practice Guidance and Changes to the Code**

The Convenor explained that the numbers of Cross Party Groups have been increasing; adding extra pressures on the Parliament's facilities, so the Scottish Parliament has reviewed what is going on. The Convenor said that a summary of the new best practice guidance and change to the Code has been circulated to the Group, noted that the Group is compliant with these, and invited questions from Group members. There were no questions from Group members.

## **5. Election of Office Bearers**

The Convenor indicated that as part of the AGM process, office bearers had to be elected.

### Convenor

The Convenor asked Group members for nominations for the role of Convenor. Ms Smith MSP indicated she was happy to continue in the role if that was supported by the meeting.

Dr Judith McClure proposed Ms Smith MSP as Convenor, Seconded by Prof Matthew Maclver

### Deputy Convenor

The Convenor, Ms Smith MSP asked Group members for nominations for the role of Deputy Convenor. The Convenor indicated that the current Deputy Convenor, Mr Neil Findlay MSP, had expressed an interest in continuing in his role.

Mr George Adam made the suggestion that instead of having a Convenor and Deputy Convenor, the Group should consider having two co-convenors, along the lines of Mr Adam's co-convenorship of the Fair Trade Cross Party Group with Mr James Kelly MSP. Mr Adam said he would propose Mr Colin Beattie MSP for the role of Co-convenor. Mr Colin Beattie said he would be interested in the role of Co-convenor. The Convenor said that she was happy for the committee to consider this proposal and explained that this matter would be discussed at the next meeting on Thursday 9 May.

Ms Smith MSP proposed Mr Findlay MSP as Deputy Convenor, Seconded by Mrs Anne McTaggart MSP

Mr Marco Biagi MSP said that a forward sweep of meeting dates would be appreciated and suggested that these meeting dates are circulated early and often to ensure as many MSPs and other Group members can attend as possible. The Convenor agreed and noted that the date of the next meeting has already been agreed and circulated as Thursday 9 May 2013, 12.30 – 2.00 pm in Committee Room 2.

Mr Jim Eadie MSP, Ms Clare Adamson MSP, Ms Annabel Ewing MSP and Mr Colin Keir MSP raised a concern that the AGM had started a few minutes early when it had been intimated as a 1.00 pm start. The Convenor apologised for this, but had decided to start early in the interests of allowing the three guest speakers maximum time for their presentations and because she understood from the secretary to the committee that those who had intimated they were attending were already present in the room. The Convenor offered those MSPs not present at the earlier time the opportunity to make a contribution to the deliberations of the AGM.

Meeting closed.

## **Topical Meeting**

### **1. Welcome and Introduction from the Convenor**

The Convenor, welcomed everyone to the eleventh meeting of the Cross Party Group. The Convenor thanked Dr Judith McClure and the Scotland China Education Network (SCEN) for providing the lunch for today's meeting.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

### **3. Introduction to the topic of Scotland's educational links with China / Presentations**

The Convenor introduced the speakers on the topic of Scotland's educational links with China and noted that questions would be taken at the end of all three presentations.

#### **Dr Judith McClure, Convener, Scotland China Education Network (SCEN)**

Dr McClure thanked the Convenor for the opportunity to discuss the topic of Scotland's educational links with China before highlighting the Convenor's question to the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs on the implementation of the Scottish Government's China Plan 2012-2017, *Working with China*, particularly on increasing opportunities for young people to learn Chinese. The Cabinet Secretary indicated that there are 13 teachers of Chinese in local authority schools. Dr McClure emphasised the need for everyone to work together on this important aspect of Scottish life as, with 1.3 billion people, China will become the world's next super power.

Dr McClure gave an account of SCEN's history and the work going on across Scotland. SCEN was founded in January 2006 as a voluntary association with Scotland's first China Plan published that year (and later refreshed in 2008 with a new plan in 2012). Dr McClure highlighted the opening of the Confucius Institute for Scotland at the University of Edinburgh in 2007 and said that Scotland is punching above its weight. Dr McClure told the Group about ongoing work in schools, including that Mandarin is being taught to Advanced Higher Level; a China component remains part of Modern Studies course; teachers of Chinese trained at Moray House have received full registration from GTCS; there are now three Confucius Institutes in Scotland, namely Edinburgh, Glasgow and Strathclyde (Confucius Institute for Scottish Schools) and soon to be fourth in Aberdeen; and Scotland has 12 Confucius classroom hubs. Dr McClure then highlighted what is being done in universities, including the Scottish Centre for Chinese Studies at the University of Edinburgh; Scottish Centre for Research at the University of Glasgow; Chinese-English Interpreting and Translating at Heriot-Watt University; Scottish universities collaborative research projects with Chinese universities; and distance learning students in China, for example MBA at Heriot-Watt University's Edinburgh Business School.

Dr McClure told the Group that Scotland needs more trained, experienced teachers; that there is also the need to look at Chinese provision in Scotland's colleges; and that we need all students to have the opportunity to study Chinese. Dr McClure explained that many businesses are still not

strong enough in working with China. When it comes to tourism, Scotland is marred by its lack of languages.

Dr McClure explained about the role of, and work done by, SCEN and how it engages teachers, pupils, and increasing university students and young professionals in events and actions around Scotland. Examples included the free SCEN China Youth Summit at Gleneagles in November 2012 and the upcoming SCEN Learning in China and Scotland event in collaboration with the Confucius Institute at the University of Edinburgh to be held on 14 June in the Playfair Library, University of Edinburgh. Dr McClure recommended that members of the Group sign up to monthly bullet-ins from John Somers ([John.Somers@fco.gov.uk](mailto:John.Somers@fco.gov.uk)), First Secretary Scottish Affairs in UK Embassy in Beijing. Dr McClure also highlighted that a digital map of Scotland/China links could be produced to give effective information to those interested. Dr McClure concluded by saying that research by Jim Scott has shown that 10% of Scottish schools offer some Chinese – though this can be taster courses only – and said the challenge is working with local schools to take the relationship between Scotland and China forward.

**Mr Shengchun Yao, International Business Manager, City of Glasgow College**

Mr Yao presented to the Group on the City of Glasgow College's business development and links with China. Mr Yao said the college's mission is to become a world class international college and explained that China is the most important student market from a business development point of view. The college's vision is to showcase what we can do here in Scotland. Mr Yao referred to the Scottish Government's China Plan from 2006 (refreshed in 2008 and updated in 2012) and said that the college follows direction of Government to strengthen its links with China.

Mr Yao said that the college adopted its strategy in 2006, the purpose of which was recruiting students in China. Since 2006, the college has been increasing and strengthening its links with China. Mr Yao explained that of the 10 schools in the college, eight have links with China. As well as HNCs and HNDs being offered to Chinese students, the college is offering more than its traditional courses, for example the college offers English language courses. The college has local partners in China not only to recruit students, but also to establish local institutional links, help companies with their workforce development and develop workers' employability skills.

The college is working with teachers in China to teach English language and at the same time is exchanging information about how courses are taught in Scotland. Mr Yao emphasised the range of the activities the college is involved in, including exchange trips between China and Scotland; a partnership with Hubei University of Economics in China; offering students online content; summer schools for university students from China created in partnership with Chinese students; and joint curricula content.

**Ms Frances Christensen, General Manager, The Confucius Institute for Scotland**

Ms Christensen referenced a 16-page summary produced by Universities Scotland giving a summary of Scotland's universities' China work. It was agreed that this summary would be shared with Group members and posted on the Group's page of the Scottish Parliament's website.

Ms Christensen said there are research centres at four Scottish universities, namely Edinburgh Napier University; Heriot-Watt University; University of Glasgow; and the University of Edinburgh which has a joint research centre with Peking University and the China research Centre for the UK. Ms Christensen explained that most Scottish universities have Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) which signal an agreement to get engaged. Ms Christensen said a good measurement in terms of MoU is how many are being worked on rather than how many there are. On research collaboration, Ms Christensen said that each University should focus on its individual strengths while taking note of future trends as evidenced in Scottish Government's China Plan and the latest five-year plan from China.

Ms Christensen highlighted a range of issues with Scotland's universities' engagement with China, including the imbalance of the staff/student exchange programme which sees more staff/students coming to Scotland from China than are going from Scotland to China. Another issue is that Scotland is not attracting its fair share of students from China. In 2005/06 Scotland was attracting 38% of Chinese students choosing to study overseas, but in 2010/11 that has dropped to 21%. Ms Christensen explained this can partly be explained by other markets getting better, for example Australia and Hong Kong. Ms Christensen explained that UKBA policy changes make things very difficult for Scotland's universities – when students have bad experiences our reputation drops. Ms Christensen said that a simple policy change could help us.

Ms Christensen highlighted the strategic approach taken by the University of Edinburgh to build up sustainable, worthwhile relations through a range of activities in both China and Scotland. The development of a 'China Focus' website has ensured visibility of activity which further helped to identify best prospects. She understood Dundee University had a similar website recording its China engagement.

On the Scottish Government's China Plan, Ms Christensen told the Group that the Plan had broad targets and a great number of things are going on. Ms Christensen believes the targets could be more ambitious and could include targets for colleges and schools to attract students from China. On the challenges and opportunities of China, Ms Christensen said universities can be selective as they should want long-term commitments which are visible, worthwhile and sustainable. Ms Christensen emphasised that Scotland has global competition when it comes to China, so universities cannot work in silos. In conclusion, Ms Christensen pointed out that when the fourth Confucius Institute opens in Aberdeen, Scotland will have more Confucius Institutes per head of population than any other nation in the world.

#### **4. Discussion**

##### What more can be done by stakeholders

Ms Ewing MSP talked about the example of Crieff High School's exchange arrangement with China and how pupils who have participated have described it as 'life-changing'. Ms Ewing asked what more can be done, including by MSPs on the issue. Dr McClure said the Crieff example was an excellent one and the exchange programme is funded by former Morrison's Academy pupil from Hong Kong, who supports the partnership between Morrison's and Crieff High School. Dr McClure said another example is Liberton High School in Edinburgh taking their pupils to China.

### Immersion techniques

Mr Marco Biagi MSP said he is a strong supporter of the 1+2 approach to learning languages and welcomed Dr McClure's enthusiasm for encouraging Chinese language teaching. Mr Biagi asked about immersion techniques/courses and the potential in Scotland for parents to benefit from/provide these techniques. Dr McClure said immersion is a lot to ask. Dr McClure suggested that what needs to be done is to ask primary school teachers to work with native speakers. For example, a project in East Lothian has shown a lot of potential where native speakers are involved in the classroom, but the primary teacher takes the lead.

### European and External Relations Committee

Ms Adamson MSP said that evidence on the topic has been given to the European and External Relations Committee and asked if the day's presentations could be shared with the Convenor of the Committee. The Convenor said that the presentations would be shared.

### Curriculum for Excellence

The Deputy Convenor, Mr Findlay MSP said that the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) offers a tremendous opportunity and asked if this would bring about a change in approach. Dr McClure agreed that CfE is a great vehicle for the teaching and learning of languages.

### Challenge: a new model for learning languages

Prof MacIver said that we do not do foreign languages very well in Scotland. In terms of Gaelic, efforts have not been good enough over the last 25 years. Mr MacIver argued that we need a new approach in Scotland, particularly as Mandarin has huge potential. The new model is needed for Gaelic, French and German too, and this need is highlighted by the numbers of pupils presenting for these languages in schools at certificate level. Dr McClure said she is absolutely up for that challenge and said that the scale of the challenge can be found if everyone in the room asks themselves how confident they are at speaking in a foreign language.

Dr Barbara Fennell explained that at the University of Aberdeen, a curriculum review was carried out five years ago with interesting results. Before the review, languages were floundering and the University decided that the situation needed to be refreshed. Since the review, Aberdeen has seen a dramatic increase in the number of students learning languages. Dr Fennell said we need joined up thinking and we need a joined up programme now.

Mr Biagi MSP said that by looking at the history of languages, it is difficult to pick a winner in terms of which one to teach. Mr Biagi asked if China is just an economic fad and how much can we rely on the odds. Dr Fennell explained that there is a difference between a language with a base of 100 million speakers such as German and a language with a one billion base. Dr Fennell pointed out that in Scotland no real thought has been put into Hindi yet.

### University student engagement

Ms Catherine Thwaites, NUS Scotland, raised the issue of international engagement of students. A pilot is being run at the moment where university students who have been abroad go into schools to tell the pupils about the study abroad opportunities available to them at university. Ms Thwaites said that according to work by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), more important than language

is being able to communicate across cultures. Ms Thwaites also said there is a need for more investment in Scottish schools when it comes to language learning.

#### Map of where Mandarin is taught in Scotland

The Convenor referred to a conference on Chinese language learning at Gleneagles at which young people said there was no Mandarin teacher in their school and were not sure if a neighbouring school or college had the facility. The Convenor asked how close we are in Scotland to having a map of where Mandarin can be studied. Dr McClure told an anecdote of two pupils from James Gillespie's High School who contacted all headteachers in Edinburgh to ask if they could study Chinese at their school. Dr McClure said the Confucius Institute at the University of Edinburgh was able to help the pupils.

The Convenor explained that the approach by one local authority, Perth and Kinross Council, allowed school pupils across all schools to make choices for their third, fifth and sixth year courses based on offerings at all schools in the local authority, not just limited to what was being taught at their own school. Dr McClure said she thought this was a great idea.

#### How to approach China

Mr John Henderson, Colleges Scotland, asked if institutions should focus on a particular geographical area when it comes to engagement with China or if a wider spread is a better approach. Ms Christensen said that institutions need to focus, research where they should be rather than spread themselves too thin on the ground. Dr McClure advised that institutions should not be too constrained in their approach to China.

#### **5. Date and topic of next meeting**

The Convenor advised the Group that the date for the next meeting of the CPG in 2013 will be Thursday 9 May 2013, 12.30 – 2.00 pm in Committee Room 2. The Convenor explained that Mr Finlay MacCorquodale from Edinburgh Napier University has suggested workplace learning/workforce development as the topic for the 9 May meeting. Mr MacCorquodale has agreed that Edinburgh Napier University will sponsor the lunch for the meeting.

The Convenor thanked all of the speakers and attendees for their contributions.

Meeting closed.