

**CROSS PARTY GROUP (CPG) ON SCOTLAND'S UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES  
CROSS PARTY GROUP (CPG) ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**13.00-14.00 on 13 September 2012, Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament**

**Note of Meeting**

**Present:**

Elizabeth Smith MSP	Convener of the CPG on Scotland's Universities and Colleges
Elaine Murray MSP	Convener of the CPG on Science and Technology
Tony Axon	UCU Scotland
Wes Ball	Royal Society of Chemistry
Una Bartley	Open University in Scotland
Emma Beeby	Scotland's Colleges
Stephen Benn	Society of Biology
Joanne Buchan	Scotland's Colleges
Edward Cunningham	Royal Society of Edinburgh
Nigel Don MSP	Scottish Parliament
Stuart Fancey	Scottish Funding Council
Moirá Gibson	University of Edinburgh
Paris Gourtsoyannis	Holyrood Magazine
Simon Jennings	University of Strathclyde
Susannah Lane	Universities Scotland
David Lott	Universities Scotland
Finlay MacCorquodale	Edinburgh Napier University
Kate MacInnes	Commercialisation Scottish Enterprise
Matthew MacIver	University of the Highlands and Islands
Liam McArthur MSP	Scottish Parliament
Charles Marriott	Universities Scotland
David McBeth	University of Strathclyde
Keith McDonald	Scottish Funding Council
John Mills	Heriot-Watt University
Bristow Muldoon	Royal Society of Edinburgh
Robin Parker	NUS Scotland
Alan Robertson	Holyrood Magazine
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland
Heather Sloan	Universities Scotland
Keith Small	Pagoda PR (Scotland's Colleges)
Colin Taylor	Scottish Parliament
Derek Waddell	University of Edinburgh
Pauline Ward	Universities Scotland
James Wilson	Universities Scotland

**Apologies:**

Jackie Baillie MSP	Scottish Parliament
Neil Findlay MSP	Scottish Parliament
Charlie Jeffery	University of Edinburgh
Paul Little	City of Glasgow College
James Miller	Open University in Scotland

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

Ms Smith MSP, Convener, welcomed everyone to the special joint Cross Party Group meeting. Ms Smith introduced Dr Elaine Murray MSP, Convener of the Cross Party Group on Science and Technology. It was pointed out that copies of a flyer were available around the room advertising the KE Scotland Conference: Policy Practice, Impact to be held on Friday 5 October 2012 at the Edinburgh Conference Centre. It was also pointed out that copies of NUS Scotland's report, *Unlocking Scotland's Potential* were available. Ms Smith said that knowledge exchange was a topical issue and that this is an exciting time for links across industry, universities and colleges. Ms Smith asked the Group to note that a SFC consultation paper had been launched and the consultation will run to 25 October 2012. Ms Smith explained that there would be five speakers at today's meeting and asked that questions be kept until after all presentations had been made.

Dr Murray said that it was a sensible idea to hold a joint meeting as this meant a larger audience for the speakers. Dr Murray noted that the last meeting of the CPG on Science and Technology discussed women in STEM; minutes for that meeting have been circulated; and invited members of the CPG on Scotland's Universities and Colleges along to future meetings of the CPG on Science and Technology.

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

## **3. Presentations**

### **Mr Mervyn Jones, former Council Member, Scottish Funding Council**

Mr Jones presented on the work of the 'Single Knowledge Exchange Office' Working Group. Mr Jones was the independent Chair of the group, comprising universities, industry and the Scottish Funding Council, set up to look into knowledge exchange in the university sector and the feasibility of a single knowledge exchange office following the Cabinet Secretary's instruction in the Ministerial Letter of Guidance. Mr Jones explained that the short term working group started out with three principals of a good system: relationships as key; work with the complexity of business and academic systems; and appropriately harmonised systems. Mr Jones went on to discuss how the group looked at international comparisons with a view to learning lessons from elsewhere. However the group concluded that the specific character of the business base is important which made straight-forward transplantation of a system from elsewhere undesirable. Mr Jones said that the system in place in Scotland works well and stacks up internationally, with many building blocks already in place. However, improvements could still be made. Mr Jones said that resources should remain in HEIs so

that institutions' ability to develop relationships with industry still exists; it would be detrimental if the pursuit of a single knowledge exchange office obstructed good one-to-one relationships between university and business. Mr Jones outlined the working group's recommended structure for a single KE organisation for Scotland and noted the importance of working within Scotland's key sectors, using the Industry Leadership Groups to understand the particular needs of each sector. Mr Jones highlighted Interface and [www.university-technology.com/](http://www.university-technology.com/) as two successful structures already in place that could be into national operations. Mr Jones said there was work needed to align public sector initiatives with universities' work and, in addition, said work was also needed to encourage more entrepreneurial spirit.

**Mr John Burt, Principal, Angus College**

Mr Burt said that colleges and universities are "different beasts" when it comes to knowledge exchange and explained that different terminology needs to be applied to each sector's work. Mr Burt praised the Deep Knowledge Transfer Initiative which involved £7 million of funding from the SFC and ran from 2008-2011, allowing external businesses to access colleges' resources. (See the evaluation at [www.sfc.ac.uk/knowledge\\_exchange/Colleges/KnowledgeExchangeColleges.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/knowledge_exchange/Colleges/KnowledgeExchangeColleges.aspx).) Mr Burt explained that the Initiative had delivered a good return on the investment and resulted in increased numbers of jobs and revenue for the companies involved. Mr Burt also highlighted activities at various colleges, including the Design Drafting Initiative at his own Angus College which this year had produced its 200<sup>th</sup> Modern Apprentice in Design and Draft engineering in response to an industry shortage identified five years ago. Colleges are well places to customise onsite delivery of training for businesses.

**Mr Derek Waddell, Chief Executive Officer, Edinburgh Research and Innovation Limited, Director of Research Services and Commercialisation, University of Edinburgh**

Mr Waddell highlighted that the University of Edinburgh is a major research university and very active in the commercialisation of that research. Mr Waddell talked about how the University has successfully commercialised the world-class intellectual property (IP) it generates with all the intellectual, social and economic benefits that flow from that. Mr Waddell noted that the University's commercialisation arm, Edinburgh Research and Innovation (ERI) is a recognised UK leader in knowledge transfer and commercialisation. Mr Waddell explained that the University has seen an increasing impact from knowledge transfer with more staff wanting to engage with commercialisation. The university was working with many SMEs and has also grown its focus on encouraging student and graduate entrepreneurialism which has been recognised in national awards. LAUNCH.ed, a free University of Edinburgh service that supports student entrepreneurs, has been an important project in this context. Placing the University's working in an international context, Mr Waddell also talked about ERI's annual Exploitation Efficiency Survey which compares the exploitation performance of the top eight research universities in Scotland with the university system in the USA, noting that Edinburgh outperforms the USA on four of five measures.

**Ms Eleanor Mitchell, Commercialisation Director, Scottish Enterprise, Tayside**

Ms Mitchell discussed how Scottish Enterprise is addressing the challenge of growing indigenous companies out of the expertise that exists in Scotland's research base. Ms Mitchell explained that Scottish Enterprise sees commercialisation and internationalisation as key to Scotland getting out of the current economic crisis. Ms Mitchell noted that the Scottish Government's position is that

innovation and commercialisation are important to economic growth and the 2011 Manifesto Commitment of £45 million minimum annual investment to support the commercialisation of academic research and stimulate a greater level of innovation in businesses, particularly SMEs. Ms Mitchell said that a 2008 study of Scottish Enterprise work to support knowledge exchange found that the current approach is working, though some challenges do remain. Scottish Enterprise had looked to streamline the “client journey” from a business point of view as multiple initiatives from enterprise agencies had the potential to be confusing. It was important to identify gaps and look to fill them, for example through Extended Innovation Vouchers, and remove any duplication in support mechanisms. Impacts of the current approach include an increase in potential of companies coming through and an increase in ‘return of investment’ to the public sector purse between 2004 and 2011 of £1.20 to £3.20 for every £1.00 spent. Ms Mitchell said that Scottish companies with potential for growth need innovative ideas of the type that are so evident the academic base. What is needed is investment and commercially experienced people and that is the role the enterprise agencies can play.

**Dr David McBeth, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services, University of Strathclyde and Chair of the Association for University and Industry Links (AURIL)**

Dr McBeth highlighted that the Association for University and Industry Links (AURIL) was the biggest such association in Europe and had members from all over the UK and Eire. Dr McBeth talked about a number of schemes operating in Scotland including the Royal Society of Edinburgh’s Enterprise Fellowships Programme, which has been running for 15 years and he believed to be one of the most productive company creation schemes in the world in terms of return (investment, jobs) per public pound invested. He also referred to the Scottish Enterprise Proof of Concept Fund/Programme, which was started in Scotland ahead of similar schemes elsewhere (including England) and was well received by universities and investors. Dr McBeth also talked about ongoing work at the University of Strathclyde including the Advanced Forming Research Centre based at the University which has attracted a core programme of research and innovation in Scotland that otherwise would not have come to Scotland before from companies such as Rolls Royce and Boeing. Dr McBeth explained that this investment generates new jobs now and in the future. Dr McBeth also touched upon the University of Strathclyde’s Technology & Innovation Centre (TIC) which will begin operating in 2014 and the fact that the University is the only European university which has won full-scale feasibility projects (three in the last year) from the South Korean Government. This, said Dr McBeth, shows that Scottish knowledge transfer capability is competing on the world stage and winning.

#### **4. Discussion**

Encouraging more existing businesses to engage with universities

Mr Nigel Don MSP welcomed the afternoon’s illuminating talks but asked about concerns that the system can be improved for those already in business but have not really thought that universities are there for them. Mr Jones responded by saying that, in fact, Interface alongside universities’ commercialisation offices were constantly working to expose new SMEs to the benefits of working with Scottish universities. Schemes such as the SFC innovation vouchers provided support to initial engagements with the sector thereby removing the financial risk for companies. Mr Mervyn Jones said that the number of SMEs who could, but don’t presently engage with universities is not actually that large. Ms Eleanor Mitchell said that companies are often more comfortable working with other

companies and in their own geographic locality, so the challenge is to get businesses to look up and look wider.

#### Defining 'knowledge exchange'

Mr Robin Parker said that the session had been useful and asked if we are defining knowledge exchange widely enough, to include the transfer of cultural and social benefits from universities and colleges, and questioned whether the terminology is correct. Mr Parker cited examples including the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's performances and a man coming into Edinburgh's Telford College for lunch. Mr Parker asked how broad we could make the topic. Mr John Burt said that colleges were approaching knowledge exchange from this perspective and said that leadership must be outward-looking during the college regionalisation process. Mr Mervyn Jones said that the definition used is for brevity and warned that if you wanted to you could spend all your time trying to define the term. Mr Simon Jennings highlighted the cultural and political impact of knowledge exchange in an invisible economy that is hard to measure, for example university experts giving evidence to Scottish Parliament Committees or Scottish Government officials and therefore impacting on policy development.

#### Intellectual Property

Mr Nigel Don MSP asked two questions: firstly, how members of universities/colleges get their time costed and is this getting in the way; and, secondly, are universities prepared to let intellectual property rights go to companies and is this a barrier. Mr Derek Waddell responded by saying that full economic costing does not get in the way, but rather academic interest is the 'problem' to be solved. Intellectual Property is no use to universities sitting on the shelf as the whole point is getting it out into the market. Mr Waddell further pointed out that companies do not always need to own what it is that they are doing. Mr Alastair Sim also responded by saying that through Universities Scotland's graduate employability work he had received feedback from employers on Intellectual Property saying that universities are taking a more flexible approach and that there has been a good evolution in this area.

On the point of full economic costing, Mr Simon Jennings pointed out that Research Councils UK have made this a requirement for universities rather than this being a requirement set by universities themselves.

#### STEM subjects

Mr John Mills raised his concern about dwindling numbers of British students entering science/research subjects. Mr Mervyn Jones said that this problem was well documented and there is a need to make people there is something special about doing something that is not easy. Mr Jones also highlighted that knowledge exchange should have an important undergraduate as well as postgraduate space. Mr John Burt said that more college engineering courses were full now compared to a few years ago. Dr David McBeth said companies are keen to know how we get children through school into science subjects. Mr Robin Parker suggested that one solution to STEM participation could be found through the widening access agenda, for example joint university/school provision of Advanced Higher courses where universities come in where schools are unable to run the courses.

### Annual Science in Parliament Event – 14 November 2012

Mr Bristow Muldoon highlighted that this event was taking place and members of the two CPGs were welcome to attend.

#### **5. Minute of Last Meeting for approval**

It was agreed that the Minute of the Last Meeting of the CPG on Scotland's Universities and Colleges on 19 April 2012 be taken as read.

It was agreed that the Minute of the Last Meeting of the CPG on Science and Technology on 31 May 2012 be taken as read.

#### **6. Future meeting and close**

Ms Smith thanked all speakers and attendees. The next meeting of the Cross Party Group on Scotland's Universities and Colleges will take place on Thursday 8 November from 12.30 – 2.00 pm in Committee Room 4 of the Scottish Parliament. There is no date set for the next meeting of the Cross Party Group on Science and Technology.

Meeting closed.