

MEETING NOTE

The Cross Party Group on Germany

Wednesday, 17th April 2013

5:30-6:30 PM

Meeting Room TG.20

Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, 12th June 2013

5:30-6:30 PM

Meeting Room Q1.03

Attendees

Humza Yousaf, Minister for External Affairs and International,
Roddy MacLean, Scottish Government
Verena Gräfin von Roedern, Consul General of Germany
Heinrich Schnettger Consul of Germany
Peter Muller-McDugall, Honorary Consul of Switzerland
John Clifford, Honorary Consul of Austria
Annette Goetzkes
Petra Biberbach
James Trolland
Alyson Adam
Alison Hahm

Apologies

Maureen Watt MSP	Jana Seydel
John Pentland MSP	Nicola De Paoli
Lewis MacDonald MSP	Petra Wend
David McLetchie MSP	Manuela Calchini
David Torrance MSP	Goethe Institut – Barbara Kaulbach &
Colin Keir MSP	Lilo Borgmann,
Gordon MacDonald MSP	Petra Wetzel
Louise Gardiner	Alex Galloway

Forthcoming Diplomatic Visits:

22nd May – Bavarian Delegation

June or September – Baden Wurttemberg

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Colin Beattie MSP welcomed everyone and explained that many of the CPG members have submitted apologies because they are attending a tourism expo in Glasgow.

Mr Beattie asked Alyson Adam to explain the changes to the Code of Conduct for Cross-Party Groups.

Recent Changes to CPG

Ms Adam explained the Standards Committee is making an effort to ensure the CPGs are open and transparent to the public. As such meeting minutes and agendas will be posted online for the general public to view. Meeting minutes must be approved at the following meeting. Two MSP are required for the meeting to be official.

In the case of this meeting where there are many CPGs all going on at the same time and it is unlikely that more than one MSP would attend, the meeting will be made as a note rather than an official minute. Any decisions made at this meeting will need to be ratified at the next meeting.

Those are the most relevant changes.

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development, Humza Yousaf and Roddy MacLean Germany Desk of the Scottish Government Europe Team arrived.

Mr Beattie asked that an introduction of all around the table might be helpful and all introduced themselves.

Mr Beattie turned the time over to Mr Yousaf noting that the CPG was very pleased that he was able to attend.

Minister for External Affairs and International Development, Humza Yousaf

Mr Yousaf thanked the CPG for the invitation to attend the meeting. He acknowledged that his role was newly created, but literally covers the globe. He noted that Scotland and Germany have a strong partnership.

While Cabinet Secretary was unable to attend as she is in Germany he assured the group that she desires to attend a meeting in the future. Cabinet Secretary would best place to update the CPG on her trip. If she is unable to attend the CPG can be given a read out on how the trip went.

Alyson will ensure that the Cabinet Secretary is invited to the next meeting and /or future meeting. If Cabinet Secretary is unable to attend next meeting Alyson will obtain read out on her trip to Germany.

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Mr Yousaf commented that there are many areas of engagement between Scotland and Germany, but he would be focusing on three cultural links:

Potential of Renewable Energy
Food and Drink
Language

He spoke of the previous German Consul General Wolfgang Mossinger's interest in language and the current Consul General, Verena Gräfin von Roedern's efforts in the area of language.

Mr Yousaf then indicated that the Minister in charge of language Dr. Alastair Allan would be speaking in front of the European and External Affairs committee tomorrow (Thursday, 18th April) in regards to language teaching. He further indicated that while he did not want to pre-empt what Dr Allan said he believe it will be worth hearing/reading.

Alyson will circulate Dr Allan's statements.

Mr Yousaf went on to say that the SNP pioneered in their manifesto the 1+2 language teaching model. Dr Alistair Allan will be speaking more too that.

He spoke to cultural links between the two nations, both those that are obvious and those which are not so clear. Some links go back to 13th Century, did not list them all for time reasons. He focused on the events supported by the Scottish Government happening in 2013:

A Small Story which is a play produced Star Catchers who works with under 5s in Scotland will be performed in Berlin. Rehearsals in October and performance in November.

David Hughes Dance are currently touring Germany. Performing in Meppen this evening (Wednesday, 17th April)

Scottish Chamber Orchestra has a long association and link with Germany having had six successful concert tours and will being performing in Germany this summer. A tour is also being planned for 2014.

There are 36 Twinning Associations with many of the smaller towns and cities being the most active. While activation various between from association to association.

Mr Yousaf highlighted the work of the Goethe Institut in their effort for art and cultural exchange. He spoke of his personal actor friend, who had to learn German in 3 weeks and was able to do so with the help of the Goethe Institut. They do amazing work with cultural, art exchanges and encouraging learning the German lanaguage.

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The Goethe Institut was also involved in the Scottish Storytelling Festival Folk Tales of Europe exchange last year, along with the German Consulate. Books were exchanged, the Brothers Grimm was gifted.

While there is no formal department of cultural exchange, there is much work to be done in creating and strengthen cultural ties.

The Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop specifically went to meet with the Minister of State. Discussions were to vary from cultural links to trade and investment. She will of course be able to give a better explanation of how the trip and discussions went.

Renewables

Mr Yousaf spoke briefly about renewable technologies and the goals of the Scottish Government to become Europe's leading country in renewable energies. The Scottish Government wish to make Scotland wind and hydro nation. Scotland is on the cutting edge of renewables technology.

After the nuclear disaster in Japan it is more imprudent than ever to move towards renewables energy policy. Scotland and Germany only have a 2% difference in targets for renewables.

Renewables energy cooperation between Scotland and Germany continues through Scottish Development International, who has an on-going dialogue with Lower Saxony and Bavaria. Scottish Ministers and senior officials have been in Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen on energy matters.

Scotland takes a keen interest in climate justice. Climate change affects developing countries more than countries like Scotland. The goal of climate justice fund is to offset the climate issues of the developing world. It is an innovate strategy indorsed by world leaders. Ministers from Germany have been invited to speak at the Climate Change Conference held at Dynamic Earth on the 9th of October.

Food & Drink

Germany is the second largest export market when it comes to food & drink. Close to a £100million on food and £168million on whiskey. Germany has been in the top five of export market for the last decade.

The Scottish Government is going to be more vigorous in its strategy for exporting food and drink as part of its Economic Growth Strategy. Representations for Scotland are to be made at Anuga in Cologne which is one of the world's largest food and drink festivals.

Further Cultural Development

Mr Yousaf will be attending the Highland Gathering in Lower Saxony on the 4th May.

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Connectivity is essential in pursuing continuing links between Scotland and Germany. Launch of the Edinburgh to Hamburg flight last month was certainly a step in connectivity, but more can be done.

Petra Biberbach from Planning Aid commented about getting communities involved in regards to renewable energy especially offshore energy. Scotland is leading and should be able to get more communities bought into the idea.

Mr Yousaf replied that there is not a lot more Scotland could be doing for community buy in. The current level of buy-in is focused on promoting the Community/Climate Justice fund through active church groups, who have an interest in the international developing world.

Ms Biberbach suggested that may be the schools programmes which have been set up by Crown Estate and Mitsubishi in Scotland could be take across to Germany.

Hon. Aus. Consul Clifford suggested that a programme needs to be put into place to deal with over consumption of electricity in this country. Germany, Austria and Switzerland have done all easy things to reduce carbon output and thus did not want to agree to an additional 15% reduction proposed by the British Government. There are more aspects of the arguments that need to be teased out.

Mr Yousaf agreed there is more to be done and more arguments to be made.

Mr Yousaf asked what the Scottish Government could do or should be doing in the eyes of the Group regarding Germany.

Hon. Swiss Consul Muller-McDougall suggested that water pump technology for generating power has worked quite well in Switzerland. It involves pumping fresh water or sea water to a higher elevation lake using surplus energy which cannot be stored by the existing infrastructure. Then during times of high energy usage the water is pumped out to generate energy. It utilises the existing infrastructure without over burdening the system. The water pump system has been successfully applied in Switzerland. It is proven technology, though it is dependent upon topography.

Mr Yousaf was very impressed with the water pump discussions. He said he had never heard about tech which measures when energy is being used and he will mention the suggestion to Fergus Ewing, the Minister in charge of Energy.

Consul Schnettger spoke about the Bavarian Delegation coming to the Parliament on the 22nd of May. He has been given the impression that when a delegation comes it turns into more of a tourist/sightseeing visit. While nice he would prefer that when delegation come there should be a focus like energy and that should drive what is seen and who to meet with on the trip.

Mr Yousaf agrees that having more targeted diplomatic visits could be beneficial though the value of cultural diplomacy is very important. Could be that for the

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Bavarian Delegation it would be a good idea to get in contact with Skills Development Scotland.

Consul Schnettger pointed out that the Bavarian delegation is here to renew the Twinning Association between Munich and Edinburgh/ Bavaria and Scotland. Continuing to build the connection between the cities.

Mr Yousaf suggests that they make contact with reenergised people.

Ms Biberbach spoke about planning reform benefits

Mr Yousaf clearly stated that Scotland will not join any planning reforms strategies unless it has real substance.

Mr Beattie asks about the Germany Plan which was in action prior to 2007 and what sort of update there has been.

Mr Yousaf responded that the European Action Plan 2009 covers the interaction with European country. Priority countries are identified of which on is Germany. Priority does not necessarily mean importance, but it is safe to say that with the economic connections and cultural connection Germany is important.

He went on to say that 1+2 language policy is not a cure all for German language learning in Scotland, but it is essential that a continued working partnership will help it grow.

Consul General Verena Gräfin von Roedern suggested that the decline in foreign language is partly related to it not being mandatory after the age of 14. That policy should be looked at and readjusted.

Mr Yousaf agrees that two years is not enough and the decline in uptake is worrying.

Colin Beattie thanked Mr Yousaf and Mr MacLean for their time and for attending.

Annette Gotzikes added that there is a very positive outcome for the Languages for All programme at University of Edinburgh coming as a direct result of the CPG. Stefan Buettner put her in contact with the University of Tübingen to see how their programme works and will be taking a trips to Germany to visit them. She has also been promoted at the University and will be standardising the programme across the University. It has also been decided that the teaching will be to a standard level with potential for further levels possibly to come later. Big thank you to Stefan.

Meeting Minutes Review

Hon. Aus. Consul John Clifford mentioned that the comments from Patrick Harte of Napier University on page 3 regarding study abroad programmes taught in English. He asserted that you cannot get a full understanding of culture without the taking

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part in the language. Mr Harte's programme which says that students going abroad don't need to learn the language is a shame.

Consul General Gräfin von Roedern agrees that while it looks better in the meeting minute than in the way Mr Harte said it, students should not be discouraged from learning languages. They need to be aware of how they can profit in other ways. Learning law in another language was just an example, students are able to profit from learning German in day to day conversation as well as in their studies.

Hon. Aus. Consul John Clifford suggest that it is not that difficult as people from other countries come and learn in English.

Consul Schnettger asks that on page 3 were Mr Harte says that Erasmus has "failed" Scottish Universities, that it be corrected to Scottish Universities have not made the Erasmus programme work for them. It is not Erasmus that has 'failed' but the Universities inability to get enough students to take-up the opportunities.

Meeting minute will have to be approved at the next meeting along with this meeting note.

Information from the Universities Scotland regarding their looking into how individual universities deal with student outward mobility as requested by Colin Beattie MSP.

Briefing available upon request to Alyson Adam.

Mr Beattie would like Universities Scotland to be made aware that he was asking for the information as Convener of the CPG on German and not as member for the Education and Cultural Committee as it says on the top of the briefing paper.

Mr Beattie believes that the briefing should be helpful and should cut through much of the anecdotal barriers previously discussed.

Consul Schnettger asked if the information/briefing could be shared beyond the CPG. Mr Beattie agreed that it could be shared.

Information from SPICe regarding German Higher exams requirements was presented.

Response available upon request to Alyson Adam.

The paper discusses current oral, reading and writing requirements. Also outlines the new standards as per changes resulting from Curriculum of Excellence.

Ms Adam explained regarding the previous request to find the number of Scottish Foreign Languages assistance in Germany that the information was difficult to come by as it is not gathered centrally. The British Council does gather some information, but they are requiring a Freedom of Information request. It is unlikely we will get the number soon.

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Consul Schnettger then outlined the upcoming delegation visits. (See Page 1)

Discussion of options for meeting with CPG members when delegations visit included scheduling and working with Parliament officials.

Discussion moved to what would be the topic of the next meeting.

Mr Beattie suggested that having a Minister or guest speak at the beginning of the meeting like Mr Yousaf would be useful in the future.

Many individuals were suggested by various members for future meetings. Ultimately it was decided that Fergus Ewing, Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism would be invited to the next meeting.

Ms Adam will ensure Mr Ewing is invited to the next meeting.

Topics the group would like him to cover are oil and gas production in the North Sea, renewables, green jobs and training.

Decision is taken to delay the meeting from 11th June to 12th June.

Mr Schnettger presented SCILT's German Educational Trainees across the Borders 2013 programme. It is designed to allow German Educational Trainees to stay in Scotland for up to 6 months to improve their teaching and promote language learning and intercultural dialogue.

The SCILT briefing paper is available upon request to Alyson Adam

Meeting closed by Colin Beattie MSP with thanks to all participants.