

Minutes

Cross Party Group on Poland Meeting

29th September 2015, Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 5

Attendees: Jean Urquhart MSP, Anne McTaggart MSP, David Worthington, Raymond Roszkowski-Ross, Robert L. Hodgart, John Bates, Simon Daley, Michael Borland, Antony Kozlowski, Izabela Czekaj, Andrew Roach, Krystyna Szumelukowa, Aileen Orr, Sylwia Kiro Żabińska-MacIntyre, Joanna Kieran, Zosia Wierzbowicz-Fraser, Dobrawa Jezior, Bohdan Starosta, Joanna Starosta, Robert Frost, Malwina Szymanska, Wioletta Boganow, Keith Mullins-MacIntyre, Beata Kohlbek, Pat Glacken, Maciej Malaszuk, Roddy Harrison, Barbara Wesółowska, Dorota Peszkowska, Joanna Zawadzka, Colin Smith.

Apologies received from: Danny Boyle, CG Dariusz Adler, Chester Kruk, Bartłomiej Kowalczyk, Violeta Ilendo, Gabriela Mitas, Karin Friedrich, Tomasz Borkowy, Katarzyna Jajszczok, Sylwia Spooner, Deborah Graham, Maciej Wiczyński, Anna Ruszel.

1. Welcome and Apologies.

Jean welcomed members and Apologies were made as noted above. The group was informed that Danny Boyle of BEMIS was not able to attend; his statement to be circulated after the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising.

3. David Worthington, University of the Highlands and Islands – “Scots in Poland, Poles in Scotland” project

This 3rd year University module is run by David for the second time this year, available as a video conference, not available on YouTube yet. Social media: @scottishPolish. Further details to be circulated after the meeting.

The module explores the long, two-way tradition of migration, and other forms of cultural contact, connecting Scotland and Poland historically. The dispersal of Scots to the commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania in late medieval and early modern times are assessed alongside the waves of Polish migration to Scotland since the nineteenth century, and comparisons and contrasts drawn between the two. Taught by video-conference and made available via University of the Highlands and Islands colleges and learning centres, from Perth to Argyll, Moray, Inverness, the northern and western Highlands, the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland. The module has 15 students this year and hopefully the project will carry on.

David’s new article: ‘Unfinished work and damaged materials’: historians and the Scots in the Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania (1569–1795).

Robert Frost added that Scots were not only limited to Poland, but also settled in Lithuania, Belarus and Moldova. The case of fascination with Scottish technology in Poland. Robert mentioned Prof. Karin Friedrich’s SUH project, possibility of studies on Poland at university level and opportunities of public engagement.

Lobbying at the Scottish Parliament, idea of a spring event for Polish Saturday schools was discussed - it was suggested that party politics will become increasingly important from January on, so that could be a good date of the event.

4. Subcommittees reports (as applicable)

- Education sub group

Zosia Wierzbowicz-Fraser informed the group about the event she attended dedicated to the 1+2 Language strategy, held at the Scottish Parliament on 24 September. Minister Allan was present at the event and said to get back to the CPG on Poland as soon as possible regarding our previous enquiry.

Andrew Roach announced an event for Polish teachers and parents to be held in Glasgow on 25 October to present the work of the Education group and discuss the following matters: SQA and AQA qualifications in Polish, registration with GTCS of Polish teachers and introducing Polish to Primary schools in Scotland as part of the 1+2 Language strategy. Publicity and funding needed for the event.

Polish Schools Exhibition at the Parliament – Jean to enquire whether the exhibition space is available in January.

Joanna Zawadzka informed the group members about two new projects aimed at young people:

1) Modern Apprenticeship project run by the Fife Migrants Forum aiming at supporting young migrant people in employment, education and training; project involves a series of information events and one to one support sessions. A drop-in centre in run Kirkcaldy, sessions also to be held in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Fife.

2) European Project for young people in Scotland, Hungary and Iceland, aiming at indentifying barriers to integration. Suggestions and input regarding both projects welcomed.

Anne McTaggart MSP suggested promoting Modern Apprenticeship project through MSPs.

- Support sub group

An update on ongoing activities of the Support group was given by Sylwia Kiro Żabińska-MacIntyre:

1) The first part of the See Mee campaign, designed to address the issues of suicide and mental health problems among the members of the Polish community proved to be successful and consisted of media campaign, workshops, recruiting community champions, producing leaflets and a fundraising ceilidh. Members of the committee currently involved in preparing another event - an awareness raising week around depression (Let's Talk about Depression) planned for the last week in November and consisting of workshops, presentations of self-help tools, lectures, radio broadcasts and free consultations with therapists.

2) PPN - Polish Psychologists and Psychotherapists' Networking Group met twice since the last Cross-Party Group, discussing current issues.

3) Feniks Support Services has been running a Mum and Toddler Group for Polish mums who would otherwise feel isolated in their communities. The group currently meets in Gorgie, however Feniks is thinking of starting another one in Leith as well.

4) Conversation Cafe Project, a series of 3 sessions per week in different venues in Leith (Out of the Blue, Punjabi Junction and a Polish venue Yellow Bench). It focuses on making everybody and feel welcome, providing opportunity to find new friends and take parts in activities prepared by a range of organisations.

5) The committee is currently addressing Domestic Abuse in the Polish community (signalled by clients coming for counselling, members of the mums group, clients receiving support from Edinburgh Women's Aid and its court-oriented project EDDACS) and lack of funding for counselling and support in general.

- Culture sub group

Kiro gave an update on the Scottish Polish Cultural Association organising the Kraków Christmas Crib event on 5 December at Lauriston Hall to comprise a crib building workshop for children, an exhibition and a reception. The event is organised as part of Edinburgh-Krakow partnership and funded by the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Edinburgh and BEMIS - Year of Food and Drink. More details to follow.

Izabela Czekaj informed the group about a newly created History Club in Glasgow, further details on its calendar of events to follow.

- Business sub group

Dobrawa informed the group about the Polish-Scottish Business Forum organised by the Polish Business Link on 27 November in Edinburgh to raise the profile of Polish entrepreneurs in Scotland and to highlight their contribution to the British economy and provide an opportunity to learn how Polish entrepreneurs can finance their business growth, as well as how to work with banks and other financial institutions. The event also aims to present export opportunities in Poland. The British Polish Chamber of Commerce will outline export opportunities and present the services it offers to UK companies interested in entering Polish market and provide the audience with helpful information and business insight and help create a network of Polish entrepreneurs in the UK, as well as UK exporters interested in developing business in Poland.

CPG member organisations offered two complimentary tickets for the Forum. Interested members to contact Dobrawa about the tickets.

5. Fundraising

1) Wojtek Memorial Trust - Maciej Malaszuk updated the group that the unveiling of the statue of Wojtek will take place on 7th November in Princes Street Gardens just after the One o'clock Gun at Edinburgh Castle. The Wojtek Memorial Trust is still fundraising. Among other honourable guests, WMT has invited to the unveiling Prof. Wojciech Narębski, one of the few remaining Polish veterans.

Registration via WMT website required to attend the unveiling. Children also allowed to attend.

Programme of the accompanying events to be announced shortly.

2) General Stanislaw Maczek Memorial Trust – Roddie Harrison spoke on behalf of the Trust and informed the group that their and leaflets would be ready shortly. Roddie had a meeting with the sculptor who designed the project of the bench. A clay model of the statue to be prepared as soon as there is an agreement on the inscription for the statue.

CPG input: Krystyna Szumelukowa suggested contacting a museum in Breda regarding the project and incorporating audio information about Maczek. Robert Frost suggested contacting the Polish museum in Chicago.

6. AOB

Jean: manifestos of all political parties to be put on the agenda for the meeting in the new year.

Antony Kozlowski officially introduced Izabela Czekaj, the Chair of the Polish Social & Educational Society at General Sikorski Memorial House in Glasgow. Jean presented with the Society's Honorary Membership in gratitude for all her support to the Polish community in Scotland.

Date of the next meeting: 8th December 2015 6.00 pm.