

minutes

Meeting: Cross Party Group on Scotch Whisky
Location: Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament
Date Held: Thursday 12 September 2013
Present: **MSPs:** Jackson Carlaw, Annabelle Ewing, Hugh Henry, Gordon MacDonald, Jamie McGrigor, Mary Scanlon.

Other attendees: Ian Chapman (Gordon and MacPhail), Sheena Cleland (Office of Roseanna Cunningham), Campbell Evans (SWA), Rosemary Gallagher (SWA), Jack Gemmell (Chivas), James Johnston (Chairman, The Malt Whisky Trail), Lauren McArthur (SWA), Beatrice Morrice (SWA), Robert Rae (Badenoch and Clark), Jane Richardson (Diageo), Douglas Ross (Assistant to Mary Scanlon), Ian Smith (Diageo), Devin Scobie (Caledonia Consulting).

Apologies: Claudia Beamish, Jackie Baillie, Murdo Fraser, Richard Simpson, David Stewart, Andy Rosie (SEPA), Alistair Ross (McGrigor LLP), David Walsh (Visit Scotland).

	Action
<p>Annabelle Ewing, Chair of the meeting, welcomed attendees.</p>	
<p>1. Minutes</p>	
<p>The group approved the minutes from 30 May (circulated 4 June 2013).</p>	
<p>2. Malt Whisky trail</p>	
<p>James Johnston explained that The Malt Whisky Trail was developing its enterprise across Moray-Speyside with collaboration at the heart of all of its activities. ‘The Trail’ is intended to promote the Malt Whisky industry, the many distillery visitor centres and the Speyside Cooperage. The business model currently being developed, in conjunction with the Glasgow School of Art and the Institute of Directors, had the potential to be mapped across Scotland, but Mr Johnston noted that there was no intent that one size should fit all and, whilst unable to lead other malt whisky trails, he was happy to share with other groups the lessons learnt and key issues.</p>	
<p>The Malt Whisky Trail looks to implement its new Business Plan in the spring of 2014, building on the lessons from a bumper 2013 season, and working closely with new associates, existing Partner Members and the a spectrum of businesses across Moray-Speyside. The Malt Whisky Trail is about delivering ‘The Experience’, the essence of Scotland, made up of the many and varied experiences within the Region. In addition, The Malt Whisky Trail is seen to be an integral part of the Moray Economic Strategy and with a specific contribution towards tourism.</p>	
<p>Several questions followed from MSPs that included a call for a strategic approach to Scotch Whisky tourism and linking it with other areas of interest such as golf and to other areas of Scotland where sites exist.</p>	

Campbell Evans highlighted that there are currently 8-10 new sites being built across Scotland, each incorporating tourism as part of the package. Ian Smith underlined that Scotch Whisky acts as a magnet for people with money to come to Scotland and that Scotch Whisky companies should share insight to capitalise on this opportunity.

Members agreed that tourism opportunities in 2014 will be significant and that MSPs will do what they can to highlight Scotch Whisky during this time. MSPs also agreed to establish what Visit Scotland's approach is with regard to highlighting the Scotch Whisky industry to visitors.

MSPs

3. Update on Scotch Whisky industry

Campbell Evans informed the group that a hearing will take place on 11 October regarding minimum unit pricing. It is expected this hearing will set a date for the appeal to be heard. The appeal is likely to take 4-6 days and be held in early 2014.

Campbell also stated that the export statistics for the first six months of 2013 show a volume increase of 11% and value increase of 9% compared to the same period last year and that Scotch Whisky worth £2 billion was exported in the first half of 2013.

Industry growth in Africa continues and Pete Wilkinson, SWA Director of International Affairs, recently visited Angola to examine opportunities and regulatory issues.

Members were encouraged to attend the Scotch Whisky Association's receptions being held at each of the political party conferences over the coming weeks.

He also informed the group that the new Chief Executive of the Scotch Whisky Association will start in January 2014. Following the meeting, details were announced that the position will be filled by David Frost, currently employed in the Department of Business Innovation and Skills in London.

4. Date of next meeting and AOB

Beatrice Morrice informed the group that 30 MSPs expressed an interest in visiting a Scotch Whisky site over recess. Some visits are still to take place but many have already occurred with both MSPs and industry employees stating how pleased they were with the visit. Beatrice thanked both the hosts at the Scotch Whisky sites and the MSPs who took the time to visit. Any MSP who is still interested in visiting a Scotch Whisky site should contact Beatrice at bmorrice@swa.org.uk.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 5 December at 1pm in TG20/21. Future meetings will be held on: Thursday 27 February and Thursday 29 May at 1pm. Topics for future meetings are currently being drawn up and members were encouraged to provide any issues they would be keen to focus on at a future meeting.