

minutes

Meeting: Cross Party Group on Scotch Whisky
Location: Adam Smith Room, Committee Room 5 Scottish Parliament

Date Held: Wednesday 24 February 2016

Present: **MSPs:** Gordon MacDonald, Mary Scanlon, Hugh Henry, Jamie McGrigor.

Other attendees: Campbell Evans (Atholl Crescent Consultants), Annie Hill (Institute of Brewing and Distilling), Lauren McArthur (SWA), Douglas Meikle (SWA), Beatrice Morrice (SWA), Tony Reeman-Clark (SCDA), Devin Scobie (Caledonia Consultants), Ian Smith (Diageo), and David Williamson (SWA).

Gordon Macdonald MSP chaired the meeting and welcomed attendees.

1. Minutes

The group approved the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2015.

2. Skills

Dr Annie Hill, Associate Professor, International Centre for Brewing and Distilling (ICBD), Heriot Watt University, provided a short history of the organisation. She explained that the ICBD offers the only degree in brewing and distilling in the world and that they currently have 60 MSc students on campus, 110 MSc distance learning students and 56 undergraduates. Onsite, the ICBD has a pilot distillery that consists of a wash still and spirit still, as well as a full range of analytical equipment.

Annie explained that the ICBD works closely with the Scotch Whisky Research Institute, the James Hutton Institute, Brewing Research International and Napier University. As well as teaching, research is conducted in areas such as raw materials, new product development and recently on a Scottish Botanicals Library and fruit spirits.

ICBD Graduates are employed globally in brewing and distilling, including Kirsty Black and Christian Perez of Arbikie Distillery. Job opportunities have recently increased due to the uplift in the number of distilleries in Scotland and elsewhere.

Annie also provided information on the Institute of Brewing and Distilling, a membership organisation that provides education and professional development in the science and technology of brewing, distilling and related industries.

Following the presentation, CPG members discussed the strength of 'brand Scotland' and heard that in the USA there is a particular interest for Scottish products. They also discussed the increase in gin production and how smaller breweries are able to provide unique products of interest to consumers.

Action

3. Scotch Whisky Update

Beatrice Morrice (SWA) provided an overview of the CPG and the Scotch Whisky industry since the group began in 2011.

She underlined the wide range of topics covered by the group, including a presentation from the Scottish Government on working with the industry to tackle alcohol misuse, from RSPB welcoming the industry's environmental strategy and Scottish Development International on Scotch Whisky's exporting reach.

Beatrice highlighted the changes to the industry over the duration of the CPG over the last five years including:

- 32 new market registrations for the Scotch Whisky Geographical Indication (bringing the total to 68).
- 7.5 million tourists visited a Scotch Whisky distillery.
- A new Scotch Whisky Action Fund was launched.
- Unprecedented growth in the number of new distilleries.

David Williamson (SWA) explained the Association's position on the EU referendum, with the industry strongly supportive of continued UK membership of the EU. He also noted the forthcoming UK Budget on 16 March and the industry's case for a further 2% excise duty reduction.

In the subsequent discussion, the group learnt that the origin of tourists visiting distilleries are predominantly from the UK or France and agreed following the election, that the CPG on Scotch Whisky should encourage employees to attend meetings so that a wide range of first hand experiences of the Scotch Whisky industry could be attained. It would be for MSPs in the next Parliament to consider how to constitute the group going forward.

4. AOB

Gordon Macdonald MSP highlighted that a Scotch Whisky Association reception in the Garden Lobby on Thursday 17 March from 5.45pm on Skills and Training in the Scotch Whisky industry. All members are welcome to attend and further details are available from Beatrice.

Members of the group thanked the SWA, and in particular Beatrice Morrice, for its secretariat support for the CPG over the course of the Parliamentary term. David Williamson thanked both Gordon and Mary for their hard work as co-convenors of the group, wishing Mary well when she retires from Parliament at the end of the current session.

For more information please contact Beatrice Morrice bmorrice@swa.org.uk or call 0131 222 9247.