

MEETING MINUTES

Cross Party Group on Germany

Tuesday, 25th September, 5.30pm

TG.20/21

Next Meeting

5.30pm, TG.20/21, Tuesday 13th November 2018 [inc. AGM]

Attendees

Colin Beattie MSP, Scottish Parliament
Annette Götzkes, Edinburgh University
Graeme Henderson, Scottish Parliament
Stephen Ingledew, FinTech Scotland
Dave Pearson, Star Renewable Energy
Barbara Strickland, German citizen
Stephen Taylor, Technology Scotland
Jens-Peter Voss, Consul General of Germany
Maureen Watt MSP, Scottish Parliament

Apologies Anthony Ashbrook, Petra Biberbach, Eleoma Bodammer, Cameron Buchanan, Manuela Calchini, Daniel Johnson MSP, Richard Muir, Alex Mackenzie Smith, Stuart McMillan MSP, Nikolai Petersen, Sigrid Rieuwerts, Elaine Smith MSP, Hans-Georg Thönges, James Trolland, Petra Wend.

Topics Discussed:

1. Approval of previous minutes

The group approved the minutes from the May meeting.

2. Stephen Taylor, Technology Scotland

Colin Beattie (CB) welcomed Stephen Taylor (ST) to the group's meeting.

ST gave the group a presentation on Technology Scotland and its work. The presentation covered aspects such as:

- the role of Technology Scotland as an industry association
- the three main clusters that form Technology Scotland:
 - Scottish Optoelectronics Association
 - MaaS Scotland
 - Design Network Scotland

MEETING MINUTES

- an outline of both 'emerging' and 'enabling' technologies, with a focus on Scotland's enabling technology sector
- the importance of photonics to the technology industry, from Scottish, UK, German and global perspectives
- how Technology Scotland is collaborating with German counterparts through the British German Business Network, the 2017 Berlin Trade Mission on Photonics and the 2018 Bavaria Trade Mission on Auto & Smart Mobility
- the industry's concerns over Brexit, especially for mid-sized or smaller companies

CB asked ST to define the 'Internet of Things'. ST replied that this is anything – such as a smart fridge or doorbell - that connects to the internet. Maureen Watt (MW) asked if the sensors used in such devices generate heat and thus contribute to global warming. ST replied that this is technology-dependent, with new 'organic' technology being more efficient than older tech but that some heat will still be generated.

MW noted the differences between R&D in the public and private sector, with the latter looking comparatively worse. ST stated that the sectors are measured differently and that less is spent on R&D in business as the markets are relatively mature. ST noted that Scottish Enterprise collect these figures.

MW asked if there was a connection between the Scottish photonics industry and superfast broadband investment. ST noted the importance of fibre optic cable to the industry.

Stephen Ingledew (SI) asked how Technology Scotland was attracting international photonics businesses. ST gave the example of Coherent, an American company whose biggest business is in Scotland. ST commented on the differences between California, where the focus is primarily on software, and Scotland where the focus is more towards hardware, and how the cap on student numbers in STEM subjects in Scotland is constraining growth.

SI asked if the City Region Deals in Scotland would help solve this issue; ST replied that there are not enough physicists that can design hardware and that Technology Scotland intended to produce a white paper on the issue.

CB asked what engagement Technology Scotland had with the Scottish Government. ST responded that they had met with Paul Wheelhouse until the recent reshuffle, were meeting Michael Matheson in the near future, and had put in a request to Ivan McKee to speak at a forthcoming meeting in 2019.

CB spoke of the recently opened Digital Centre of Excellence in Newbattle and asked what could be done to encourage pupils to take STEM subjects at an earlier age. ST replied that Technology Scotland was aware of the need to make STEM more attractive but that funding was needed in many cases to upgrade physics equipment in schools.

Annette Götzkes (AG) asked if there were any statistics comparing the uptake of STEM subjects in schools versus the uptake of language subjects. The group agreed to write to the Scottish Parliament's Information Centre requesting this information.

MEETING MINUTES

ACTION POINT - Graeme Henderson to write to SPICe requesting comparison of STEM vs language subject uptake in schools.

The group thanked ST for his presentation.

3. Focus of the CPG

CB led a discussion on what the CPG should focus on and how it can promote links between Scotland and Germany. SI suggested engaging Linda Hanna or Paul Lewis of Scottish Development International, and the group agreed to invite Alexandra Stein to speak at a future meeting. ST suggested Alexandra Mulcahy (from SDI) or David Scrimgeour.

CB asked Jens-Peter Voss (JPV) if many German business people came over to Scotland. JPV replied that this did not occur very often and spoke of a recent delegation that was arranged through the Scotland-Bavaria partnership. MW mentioned the German/British Chamber of Industry & Commerce meeting taking place in Glasgow on 23rd October.

Dave Pearson (DP) noted that the CPG should consider topics that reflect what Scotland can offer Germany that would be of interest and that new ways need to be found of influencing and engaging with EU countries in the context of Brexit. ST gave the example of a Dalgety Bay-based company that produces coated lenses with Germany being their biggest market.

4. Political update

JPV gave the group an update on the political situation in Germany, including the state elections in Bavaria, the removal of Hans-Georg Maaßen from his role as the head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the recent changes at the Bundestag.

CB updated the group on the political situation in the UK and in Scotland, touching on Brexit, the potential for a general election, and the Scottish Government's proposed budget.

MW suggested inviting Ben Macpherson to the next meeting to speak about his new role as Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development and the group agreed to extend such an invitation.

CB closed the meeting at 7.08pm.