

Building Bridges with Israel

25 September 2018

SEDERUNT

MSPs

1. Jackson Carlaw MSP ("JC")
2. Richard Lyle MSP ("RC")
3. Murdo Fraser MSP ("MF")
4. Adam Tomkins MSP ("AT")
5. Bill Bowman MSP ("BB")
6. Maurice Corry MSP ("MC")

Non MSPs:

1. Ruth Kennedy
2. Danielle Bett
3. Alistair Barton
4. Jennie Milne
5. Dorothe Kauffman
6. Gordon Matheson
7. Stanley Grossman
8. Jean Brannigan
9. Stanley Stein
10. Douglas Flett
11. Edward Green
12. Mike Taylor
13. Liz Gibb
14. Heather Lennox
15. Wilma Wylie
16. William Mackay
17. Ian Mackay
18. Kathleen Kirk
19. Howard Kirk
20. Audrey Ewing
21. Victory Shields
22. Sandra Black
23. Andrew Wylie
24. Neil Stewart
25. Michael Kuszniir
26. Nathan Wilson
27. Euan Waddell
28. M Martin

AGM

- Jackson Carlaw MSP re-elected Convener as proposed by Richard Lyle MSP and seconded by Murdo Fraser MSP.
- Richard Lyle re-elected Deputy Convener as proposed by Jackson Carlaw MSP and seconded by Maurice Corry MSP.
- The Jewish Leadership Council were re-elected as Secretariat with unanimous support of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Jackson Carlaw MSP noted that the Minutes of 26 September 2017 and 13 June 2018 were provided to attendees and required to be approved. These were approved by Bill Bowman MSP and Edward Green.

OPENING OF FORMAL MEETING

- JC opens business and says that the main topic of this evening's CPG meeting shall be discussion of the MSP Delegation to Israel.
- JC notes that many points have arisen out of the delegation that the CPG will take forward.
- JC explains the delegation undertaken was very substantive and an intense visit because of the packed itinerary.
- JC notes that the Deputy Israeli Ambassador Sharon Bar-Li will be meeting with the delegation before Christmas.

RICHARD LYLE MSP

on the visit to Rawabi, the West Bank and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

- Impressed with what he saw of Rawabi.
 - Did not feel cloistered- there were no minders on the delegation.
 - RL felt the desire for peace was strong.
 - He believed that he saw the real situation on the ground.
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- JC advises that the delegation went from Rawabi to Ramallah where meeting with a Palestinian political fell through as he was called away.
 - The delegation then actively engaged, of their own volition, with Palestinians in Ramallah.
 - Palestinians were able to show them settlements which they thought were barriers to peace.

- Younger members do not want to see a future where Rawabi could be flattened in a future conflict.
- Many felt that their leadership is old and weak.
- MF heard that many young people are moving out from West Bank and Gaza. Many were worried that their current leadership is old and weak.
- AT says that was not an initial part of the problem with Rawabi that Israel did not supply enough water to grow the development. RL says that yes that this may have been an initial problem but it does seem to have now been overcome and more people are moving in.
- AT asked MF where these West Bank and Gaza young citizens were moving to? MF says that the majority are moving to the Middle East, especially the Gulf States and some are coming to the west. AT asks are they moving to Israel proper? MF says that not really.

MURDO FRASER MSP

discussing the delegation's visit to the Golan Heights

- Conscious of security issues but did not feel unsafe.
- Visited the Golan Heights which was captured in the Six Day War in 1967, formerly part of Syria.
- Quite a large security presence there and in addition there is a UN security buffer between Israel and Syria.
- Two weeks previously Assad's forces were shelling rebel forces just across the border.
- An Assad victory would perhaps cause future issues.
- They did not visit Gaza because of ongoing security concerns and the threat of rocket attacks in Southern Israel, Sderot.
- Also visited Tel Aviv Rangers Supporters Club with Maurice Corry MSP where many were from Giffnock – quite illuminating about life in Israel.]
- Alistair Barton asks about Iranian influence in Syria. MF notes that there is both Iranian and Saudi Arabian influence there in the background. A great conflict between Shia and Sunni.

BILL BOWMAN MSP

details the visit to the 'Save A Child's Heart' foundation and other Israeli enterprises

- BB visit Israel once before for a colleague's wedding.

- Wolfson Institute linked to former Scottish Wolfson.
- Save A Child's Heart carrying out work of extreme importance for young children with life threatening issues.
- Israel is cutting edge technology advance society as shown by Save A Child's Heart.
- JC says that the organisation sometimes needs to make some difficult decisions as if someone may require complicated aftercare then they may not be able to operate because of the lack of aftercare available in the child's native country.

MAURICE CORRY MSP

on the engagement with Israeli veterans

- MC had never visited Israel before. His father had served in Israel where he served in the Port of Haifa and Mary Fee MSP's father also served in the region.
- MC was interested in the veterans aspect from his work in The Scottish Parliament and having served for 38 years in the regular British Army and the Territorial Army.
- There is already a building of bridges with Israel already on veteran issues.
- It is a very much post service issues that we are discussing.
- MC notes that Israel has the same issues of getting veterans to join back into society after leaving the Armed Forces.
- Recruits start earlier perhaps than in the British Army and with more responsibility earlier on too.
- Can be difficult for young veterans to settle down and get back into other careers.
- Israel and the British Army work well with the Americans who are big on G1 (personnel)
- About 80% of the Israeli population are liable for call up.
- JC enjoyed The Golda Meir Foundation as it showed promotion of women as set up by former Prime Minister, Golda Meir.
- JC very much enjoyed the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and it illustrated the plurality of Israeli religious society.
- JC notes that Israeli society has gone from an orange and olive economy to a high tech economy with a very entrepreneurial culture.
- Sammy Stein: advises people of the Glasgow Friends of Israel Conference.

- An attendee asks about the Gaza border and the flashpoint of incursions. JC says that Deputy Ambassador spoke frankly on this when she visited Edinburgh in June but that a Gaza visit was not part of the Delegation. Ruth Kennedy says that they had hoped to visit Sderot, which is on the border with Gaza, but unfortunately because of the volatile situation the delegation were unable to do so.
- Alistair Barton: thanks everyone for their contributions.
- Danielle Bett: new Facebook group has been created for Israelis looking at visiting Scotland.
- JC: this was a representative trip with MSPs from Scottish Labour, Scottish National Party and the Scottish Conservatives.
- JC concludes by saying that he is filling in for Scottish Conservatives Leader Ruth Davidson MSP as she goes on maternity leave and Richard Lyle MSP will take the next couple of CPG meetings.