

Cross-Party Group on Nordic Countries

Initial Meeting

Wednesday 14th December 2016 at 12:00pm

Room TG20/21

Holyrood, Edinburgh EH99 1SP

MEETING AGENDA

- 1. Welcome, Introductions and Context**
- 2. Election of Office Bearers (Convener, Vice-Convener)**
- 3. Purpose of the Group**
- 4. Programme of Meetings**

ATTENDEES:

MSP Members:

Maurice Golden MSP
Angus MacDonald MSP
Finlay Carson MSP
Mark Ruskell MSP
Jamie Greene MSP
Marree Todd MSP
Ivan Mackee MSP

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Harry Nimmo, Honorary Consul of Finland
Amy Rice, MSP Staff

MEETING MINUTES

1. Welcome, Introductions and Context

1.A Welcome

Maurice Golden MSP welcomed attendees and thanked Harry Nimmo, Honorary Consul for Finland for attending.

1.B Introductions

Roundtable introductions were taken to familiarise members and note their particular interest in Nordic countries. Initial topics of interest included agriculture, environmental policy, social and health care, trade, digital economy, and culture.

Personal Introduction details:

- **Maurice Golden MSP** outlined that his interest in Nordic collaboration stemmed from his work in the environmental sector prior to entering Parliament.
- **Finlay Carson MSP** mentioned his interest in Nordic agriculture and technology policies, particularly wifi connectivity in rural areas.
- **Angus Macdonald MSP** expressed his interest in the group as a result of having previously lived in Norway and Denmark.
- **Mark Ruskell MSP** outlined his specific interest in Nordic environmental and social policies. He mentioned a recent trip to Helsinki with the EU green party that he found particularly interesting.
- **Harry Nimmo Honorary Consul**, outlined his role as an Honorary Consul and his connections to the Scottish-Finnish society. He expressed interest in the group because of the widespread ties and opportunities for further collaboration between Scotland and Finland.
- **Jamie Greene MSP** outlined his specific interest in Iceland, particularly its model for the digital economy.
- **Ivan McKee MSP** highlighted the similarities between Scotland and Nordic countries, particularly cultural and business ties. Ivan previously lived in Finland for a year.
- **Maree Todd MSP** mentioned the Nordic cultural links of the Scottish Highlands and Islands and her particular interest in Nordic data policies in relation to healthcare and taxes.

1.C Context

Maurice Golden outlined the aims of the CPG and the approach he has taken so far to establish the group. Prior to the initial meeting, Maurice met with the following Nordic Consulates in Edinburgh: Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Finland. Maurice approached the Honorary Consul who has expressed interest but was unable to meet due to diary constraints.

Maurice then outlined the second stage of coordination planned for once the group has been confirmed. This second stage of stakeholder engagement includes meeting with representatives of the relevant Embassies, trade bodies and society groups such as 'Nordic Horizons' once the CPG is formalised. Maurice presented these plans as tier 1 and tier 2 priorities of strategic engagement.

2. Election of Office Bearers (Convener, Vice-Convener)

The group moved to elect the Convener and Vice-Conveners of the CPG. The results were as follows:

Convener: Maurice Golden MSP Proposed by Mark Ruskell and seconded by Angus Macdonald.

Deputy Convener(s): Angus Macdonald MSP & Mark Ruskell MSP Proposed by Maurice Golden and seconded by Finlay Carson.

3. Purpose of the Group

'To promote political, cultural, educational and environmental links between Scotland and Nordic Countries; and to foster ties between Scottish and Nordic politicians.'

4. Programme of Meetings

- Events / meetings are expected to be held 3-4 times a year.
- Meetings can be either led by a Consulate's initiative or be based on specific policy themes.
- The following themes were suggested: policing, political structures (local vs. centralisation); education; agriculture; European relations.

- The following meetings were suggested for 2017:

February/March: Renewable Energy focus hosted by Vatenfall / Star Renewables

June/September: Health and Social care; particular interest expressed by Denmark

December: 100 years of Finnish Independence celebration

5. Next Steps

Mark Ruskell MSP suggested the CPG coordinate with policy specific CPGs to combine support and resources for events.

Angus Macdonald MSP suggested members of the CPG meet with representatives of Nordic Horizons to coordinate efforts. The Convenor will arrange.

ENDS