
Minutes of Inaugural Cross-Party Group on USA meeting

Location: Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 4

Date: Wednesday 26th June 2019

Time: 6.00pm – 7.30pm

Attendees:

Dean Lockhart, MSP

Liam Kerr, MSP

Murdo Fraser, MSP

Alexander Burnett, MSP

Anas Sarwar, MSP

Margaret Mitchell, MSP

Bill Bowman, MSP

Tom Mason, MSP

Hannah Ormston, Policy and Development Officer at Carnegie UK Trust

Ulrike Peter, Senior Policy Officer (International) at Universities Scotland

David Ross, Project Director at Glasgow Chamber of Commerce

Liz McAreavey, CEO at Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce

Alexia Haramis, Head of International and Corporate Development, ECC

Lola Nicolas, Corporate and International Executive, ECC

Duncan Wood, Program Director, Institute for Applied Science

William Stirling, Director at Refuge Productions

Stuart Hamilton, Scottish Chambers of Commerce

Marc Strathie, Policy analyst, Scottish Council for Development & Industry

Neil McInnes, Head of Consumer Industries & Energy at Scottish Development International

Scott Johnstone, CEO, Scottish Lifesciences Association

Alan Saloniovka, International Relations Manager, Royal Society of Edinburgh

Alan Johnston, University of Edinburgh

Caroline Welsh, Office of Maree Todd MSP at The Scottish Parliament

Tessa Bell, Regional Manager – Americas, University of Edinburgh

Neville Wylie, Deputy Principal (Internationalisation), University of Stirling

Ellen Wong, Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh

Andrew Liddle, Programs and Engagement Manager, U.S Department of State

Jo Graham, Managing Director at the Whisky Ambassador

Richard Lockhart, Adam & Co

Lesley-Anne Campbell, Parliamentary Assistant to Dean Lockhart MSP at The Scottish Parliament

Thomas Heald, Head of Office- Office of Dean Lockhart MSP at The Scottish Parliament

Julia McIntyre, Policy Advisor to Dean Lockhart MSP at The Scottish Parliament

Apologies:

Monica Lennon MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Jamie Greene MSP

Jackie Baillie MSP

Beatrice Morrice

Adam Bowie

Martin Bell
James Withers
Kenny Bowie
Allan Hogarth
Rebecca Groundwater
Sandy Kennedy
Russell Dalgleish

Stuart Patrick
Llinos Jones
Richard Clarke
David Birrell
Sarah Deas
Sara Cook

Speaker

Ellen Wong, Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

Facilitator

Dean Lockhart, MSP Mid Scotland and Fife

1. Welcome, apologies and introductory remarks

Dean Lockhart MSP (DL) welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Cross Party Group on the USA.

DL noted that there were eight apologies for absence: Monica Lennon MSP, Jeremy Balfour MSP, Jamie Greene MSP, Jackie Baillie MSP, Beatrice Morrice, Adam Bowie, Martin Bell, James Withers, Kenny Bowie, Allan Hogarth, Rebecca Groundwater, Sandy Kennedy, Russell Dalgleish, Stuart Patrick, Llinos Jones, Richard Clarke, David Birrell, Sarah Deas, Sara Cook

DL welcomed the Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh, Mrs Ellen Wong (EW).

DL suggested going round the table so the attendees could introduce themselves and explain about their interest for joining the group.

The attendees expressed interest in focusing on the following topics:

- International trade and economics: looking at opportunities for both people and businesses; the energy sector was also mentioned; interest in setting up connections to help business-to-business meetings during the trade missions between Scottish and American companies; helping companies to better understand how to tap into the American market to sell and invest with a special interest to reach out to the right states ; existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was mentioned by the representative of the Glasgow chamber of Commerce ; supporting businesses and banks to better understand the American market and find out opportunities for Scottish businesses; legal issues were also mentioned.
- Educational links and external exchanges between the Scottish and the American universities: finding a way to encourage more Scottish students to go and study into the US and vice-versa and developing ways of sharing research and information.
- Cross cultural exchange: how to build relationships and connections with the US on cultural and artistic projects
- Tourism sector
- Scientific and technical cooperation: there are many opportunities for Scottish business in life sciences, therapeutics as well as medical and digital devices. DL noted the diversity and the good representation of the different sectors attending the session.

2. Guest Speaker

2.1 Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh, Mrs Ellen Wong (EW).

EW thanked the attendees and the representatives of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce for agreeing to take on the secretariat role for the group.

EW began the discussion highlighting how impressed she has been with the historical links between the US and Scotland, dating back to the US Declaration of Independence. EW highlighted the very strong presence of Scots in America. EW informed the group of the success of Scottish exports to the US, particularly during 2018 with over 5 billion exports to the US with a heavy representation of the food and drink sector. EW explained that it is currently a prime time for businesses to develop links with the US. EW also noted the increasing number of American citizens (the numbers are up by 100K in 2017) visiting all areas of Scotland, particularly because of the interest in Outlander. Likewise there are many Scottish themed events being held in the US such as Highland Games.

Regarding education, EW added that there are more American students studying in Scotland rather than anywhere else in the UK, particularly in Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews. This is partly due to there being similarities between the two educational systems.

In terms of cultural links, EW referred to the high number of links and twinning associations between Scotland and the United States. EW also highlighted the increasing number of American visitors and US performers during the Edinburgh Festival.

EW thanked again the delegates for joining the group and is looking forward to working together with the CPG USA group to build on US Scottish links.

3. Change of Secretariat for the Group

The Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce represented today by Liz McAreavey, CEO, and Alexia Haramis, Head of International & Corporate Development, are in charge of the secretariat for the CPG USA group.

4. Open discussion on fostering business and trade relations between Scotland and US

DL opened up the discussion on trade.

Liz McAreavey (LMcA) explained some research is being carried out on the Edinburgh Chamber's current exporter database to determine which exporters might want to export to additional markets and a significant proportion of these will be to the US. The US is a priority market for the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce (ECC) members and are in the process of gathering further information from businesses to find out which states in the US are of potential interest to members so that they are able to target certain states and set up trade missions. Alexia Haramis (AH) explained that ECC is also working with non-member companies to encourage bilateral trade and are in discussions with the Boston Chamber of Commerce and the Austin and Nevada governments on potential trade visits. DL was interested in knowing if the database of businesses interested in the US market if it can be made public, LMcA explained that ECC is unable to share the database due to General Data Protection Regulation.

Neil McInnes (NMcl) said that Scottish Development International (SDI) was pleased to be participating in this CPG. NMcl highlighted the significant proportion of international trade specialists based in the US to support Scottish businesses in Boston, Chicago, San Jose and Houston with 25 staff

in market. Their focus on the US is on 50% Trade and 50% Investment. NMCI also explained that American consumers have a particular interest in Scottish food and drink products. The trade missions in the pipeline will be focussing on the East and North East Coast of the US. Investment in this region of the US is purely focused on new energy. NMCI also informed that SDI run a trade mission to Boston in the Fintech sector and in Q4 a trade mission focusing on the healthcare sector. NMCI stated how SDI is keen to work with the Chamber network on some of these trade missions.

EW revealed that new energy and natural resources sector is a growing sector and that discussions are already taking place with Aberdeen with regards to transitioning away from Oil and Gas and exploring newer energy sources.

Stuart Hamilton (SH) spoke about the International Trade Partnership funding that the Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC) have received from the Scottish Government and spoke about the eligibility criteria, stating that the participating companies have to be cross-sector companies. SCC is working on an on-line portal to gather all the upcoming inward visits, market awareness events and outward trade missions in order to allow businesses to access this information.

Scott Johnstone (SJ) from the Scottish Life Science Association advised that the Association knows specifically what their businesses are looking for and work in a very targeted approach for their sector.

SJ announced that Kentucky and Indiana are very attractive states. The outputs for life science in Scotland is around £4 billion verses £78 billion for the US. SJ added that there are opportunities for trade in fly-over states.

EW commented that organisations should look at state level partnerships and also suggested looking at trading relationships on a regional level. EW also noted that there are officials based at the Embassy in London that can assist businesses wanting to trade with the US.

Duncan Wood (DW) added that the GDP of Scotland is similar to the GDP of the state of Alabama and reminded that the approach is very different between federal and state level. The dollar has been strengthened which is a good incentive to sell to the US. The customs constantly review tariffs and quotas but this depends on the political situation.

Concerning a free trade agreement between the UK and the US, EW said that negotiations could not begin until the EU withdrawal has taken place.

DL suggested discussing e-commerce as a route to market. NMCI emphasized that for the food and drink sector it depends more on targeting the distributors to sell the products. NMCI added that SDI's e-commerce team have been focussing more on the Asian market but noted that the SDI team are working on opening up opportunities in this area to other markets including the US.

5. Open discussion on educational links

DL suggested discussing links with education and specific connections between the universities.

Tessa Bell (TB) agreed and revealed that Scotland currently has high levels of US student recruitment. US Universities continue to be attractive to Scottish students, however the high cost of the fees continues to be a challenge.

Neville Wylie (NW) noted that it is important to strengthen relations with the US within Science Research as the US has an excellent Science Research infrastructure.

EW stated that the alumni network in the US are accustomed to being approached on a regular basis for jobs and financial contributions. On another note, EW highlights the on-going restrictions for US students obtaining visas.

DL asked NMCI if he could highlight the opportunities of gaining access to the Global Scots Network. NMCI commented that SDI have been tasked to grow the network from 600-3000 Global Scots and the key way of delivering this will be through alumni relationships and working with the universities.

6. Open discussion on cultural and sporting connections

LMcA emphasized the importance of connectivity and direct flight connections. According to Edinburgh Airport, the Edinburgh – Boston air link is currently the busiest route. The direct routes generate more trade. DL commented that perhaps this CPG could focus on trying to increase the direct airlinks with the US.

Caroline Welsh (CW) mentioned the importance of setting up an online hub for Scottish graduates and highlighted the importance of offering Master courses in American studies.

SJ reminded the importance to distinguish worker and non-worker travellers. EW recommended using Global Entry to speed up entry electronically. This process would save time for travellers and facilitate movement.

Anas Sarwar (AS) mentioned that it is interesting to look at how culture can improve peoples' lives through connecting people internationally.

EW mentioned how charitable giving is big in the US and worth exploring and that there are numerous Scottish Foundations with bases in the US receiving considerable US funding.

EW concluded that this type of session and conversation carries huge benefits in terms of bringing together all interested parties across all sectors under one umbrella to build links and work together on a strategy to build on future US/Scottish collaborations.

7. Actions

- To Create an on-line communication platform for the group, ECC to create a LinkedIn USA CPG Group.
- DL to contact SRU to join this group
- To explore inviting Golf Tour operators join this group
- To form a subgroup for trade missions, with SDI and SCC to be part of this group, SH to share all the information regarding inward and outward trade missions.
- EW to let the group know when the Council of American States next visits Scotland
- EW to invite Delta to join this group
- EW to suggest setting up an event to discuss experience of doing business in the US.
- EW to suggest inviting other new members to join the next meeting.
- EW to facilitate the introduction between the Scottish Chambers and American Chambers of Commerce in the United States.
- Creation of an online hub for the US and alumni
- To work on improving direct air-links between the US and Scotland

8. AOB

DL thanked all for attending the meeting.

9. Date of the next meeting

DW will set the date of the next meeting for September/October. The date will be communicated by the Secretariat of the group.