

**Minutes of
CPG on USA meeting
05.02.2021
Virtual**

List of attendees (48)

Alastair Ross
Alexia Haramis
Allan Hogarth
Allan Johnston
Andrew Liddle
Angus Johnstone
Bill Bowman
Brad MacKay
Bruce Wilson
Bruce Wilson
Carol Dew
Claire Wilson
Craig Lemmon
David Ross
Dean Lockhart
Donella Beaton
Duncan Wood
Eilidh MacDonald
Ellen Wong
Emma Harper
Fiona Jack
Frank Cogliano
James Holness
Jamie Smith
Karri Tough
Kate Nowakowska
Keith Neilson
Kenneth Shand
Lesley-Anne Campbell
Lingyun Wang
Lola Nicolas
Lynn Blaikie
Lynn Dickson
Martin Bell
Neville Wylie
Nicole Lombardo
Nora Rothrock
Olivia McLaren
Peter Mowforth
Rachel Hamilton
Rebecca Groundwater
Richard Muir
Richard Wells
Steve Kerr
Stuart Hamilton

Stuart McCallum
Stuart Tooley
Ulrike Peter

Apologies

Calum Moultrie
Christopher J Kerr
David Whiteford
James Macsween
Peter Stuart
Sandy Kennedy
Yvette Jelfs

Agenda

10:00 am	Meeting to commence Dean Lockhart, MSP, to open the meeting, to present the agenda of the day and to introduce E. Wong
10:05 am	Ellen Wong, Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh, to outline priorities of the new Administration <i>Q&A (10 min)</i>
10:30 am	D. Lockhart to introduce the panel of speakers (5-7min each) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ulrike Peter, Senior Policy Officer (International), Universities Scotland- Prof Brad Mackay, VP International, St Andrews University- Prof Frank Cogliano, International Dean North America, Edinburgh University- Prof Neville Wylie, Deputy Principal International and Professor of International History, University of Stirling- Scott Johnstone, CEO, SLA, Scottish Lifesciences Association
	Discussion on Education with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• US student levels post-pandemic effects• Turing scheme• Scottish/US Research collaboration• Q&A
11:25 am	D. Lockhart to thank the audience and handover to E. Wong for final remarks
11:28 am	E. Wong to provide closing remarks
11:30 am	D. Lockhart to provide closing remarks Meeting to finish

Minutes:

Welcome from Dean Lockhart MSP

Dean Lockhart MSP (DL MSP) opens the meeting, presents the agenda and welcomes all attendees. DL MSP invites Ellen Wong (EW) to outline priorities of the new Administration.

Update from Ellen Wong

EW welcomes attendees and proceeds to outline the priorities for the new Administration. EW confirms the US is looking to build and strengthen existing relationships around education and research.

Priorities for the new Administration:

1. Domestic priorities – tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccine rollout, racial inequality and policy changes with regards to systemic inequality. President Biden has already signed 5 executive orders around the racial inequality agenda. Domestic priorities are a key focus, however President Biden stresses that domestic issues directly link with the foreign agenda.
2. Foreign priorities– US is now back in WHO and has re-joined the Paris agreement, President Biden confirmed that “alliances are the greatest asset of the US”. The US is looking to build back better and towards economic recovery by working together internationally. US represents 40% of Foreign Direct Investment into Scotland, it is also the single largest market for Scottish exports and the largest consumer market in the world. Virtual trade missions that have been carried out over the last few months have been successful and EW is looking forward to the next ones that are scheduled in. EW invites everyone to get in touch with the US Consulate to work on future potential areas of collaboration.
3. Climate change issues - President Biden is prioritising the development of a clean energy economy. As stated earlier, the US has re-joined the Paris agreement and has confirmed US representation at COP26 in 2021. EW invites Scottish green organizations to collaborate with the US.

EW currently has no update on the appointment of the new US Ambassador in the UK, however is confident that the US and UK partnership will continue to flourish.

Q&A with Ellen Wong

DL MSP – What is the general response of US students in Scotland to the pandemic?

EW – Not sure of numbers, however EW can confirm some US students came to Scotland as many of them came to the Consulate to renew their passports in the last year – EW does not see the pandemic affecting numbers of Americans studying in Scotland in the long-term.

Alastair Ross, Assistant Director, Head of Public Policy, The Association of British Insurers (AR) – how can we support the new ambassador?

EW – New opportunities and ideas are welcome, as well as feeding exchange of experiences.

Allan Hogarth, CEO, The Scottish North American Business Council (AH) – When do you think we will see some movement in regards to the tariffs issues?

EW – The Trade Team is not yet confirmed, but the Administration is aware of this issue and will be engaging; however there are no timelines yet.

Duncan Wood, Program Director, Admiral Wood – It is worthwhile to note and highlight the importance that the USA and the UK and Europe are all still signatories to the North Atlantic Treaty and NATO. Article 2 of which commits the signatories to “eliminate conflict in their international

economic policies” and will encourage economic collaboration between all of them, a powerful tool which we could go back to, now that UK is out of the EU.

EW – President Biden and the Administration agree that working with allies is crucial and together they should tackle economic and security issues.

Stuart Hamilton, Business Development Specialist, Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SH) – What can we learn from the previous Administration changes?

EW – Patience will be required for the time being while the new Administration learns to work together and take on a holistic look at the economy.

DL MSP added that COP26 in November 2021 is a great opportunity for Scotland to host world leaders on climate change and wider issues and this should be a topic of focus in the agenda for the next CPG USA meeting. DL MSP also noted the appointment of the new Secretary of the Treasury of the United States - Janet Yellen and her experience with monetary policies.

EW said there is a huge appetite for exploring areas of collaboration between the US and Scottish businesses that are working on the Green agenda during the run up to COP26 and does not expect major changes to US monetary policies.

Panel Discussion

DL MSP opens the panel and invites Scott Johnstone, CEO, Scottish Lifesciences Association (SJ) to give the attendees an overview of his work.

SJ explained that there is a huge opportunity for bilateral research and development for businesses across all sectors. There is a great footprint of US companies in Scotland, but also large bilateral collaboration with for example states such as Indiana – activity in this area has doubled. The focus is on clinical and trials, but also data. SJ said one of the greatest challenges are the regulations and the alignment of them. COVID-19 pandemic has also shown and taught how we can speed things up including research. Patenting is another challenge and it is crucial to have research protected so that businesses can access investment, trials and then go out to market. Work is being done with the US patent office to see if this can be done faster – in the US you can get a patent extension – but need some alignment in these areas. SJ added that the Turing scholarships are a great opportunity for Scotland.

Prof Brad Mackay, VP International, St Andrews University (Prof BM) has provided the group with some key figures – 50% of all students are from outside UK, 18% of international students are from the US. History and links between St Andrews University and the US goes back to James Wilson – one of the Founding Fathers of the US. This continues with hundreds of institutional and academic relationships and research collaborations around modern humanities, terrorism and security issues, marine studies and privacy, surveillance and history. The University is focusing on a global strategy by working with smaller institutions. The US is and most likely will be the most important partner for the University – Prof MB stated that it is crucial to deepen the organic relationships. All courses are now online and are going well – 3,000 US students are still in St Andrews. The focus will be also on the digital piece to leverage and expand collaborations. The wider ambition is also to be carbon neutral by 2035. The University wants to highlight greater issues and rise above politics to tackle the pandemic and global climate change.

Prof Frank Cogliano, International Dean North America, Edinburgh University (Prof FC) stated that he echoes Prof BM's voice on most issues. The University of Edinburgh has over 40 exchange partners in the US and many deep links with other global institutions. These relationships have been flourishing over the past year. The number of US students has held up better than the University had suspected, the number of applications for September 2021 has gone up (by nearly 60% for undergraduate studies and over 60% for postgraduate). Councilors have provided 3 reasons for this – the reputation of the University, Scotland as an attractive destination and Edinburgh as an attractive city to study in. US students still prefer Scotland rather than England (presumably due to the shorter period of gaining a degree). The University of Edinburgh's delegation usually travels to the US around springtime to secure and convert applications. Applicants are mostly concerned about the pandemic, delivery of education, health and safety, as well as mobility and travel challenges. The Turing scheme is a great promise at all education levels (schools, colleges and universities).

Prof Neville Wylie, Deputy Principal International and Professor of International History, University of Stirling (Prof NW) stated that the University of Stirling has 10% of students from the US, currently over 1500 and welcomes around 60-80 US students each year. The importance of US students is great and connections are incredibly strong. Numbers have held up and the enrollment has doubled this year. The Turing scheme will bring great advantages, however, there must be a focus on financial support for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

DL MSP thanks the speakers so far and invites EW to give her closing remarks.

EW agrees the Turing scheme is a great opportunity which still needs looking into. EW suggests the universities get in touch with the US Consulate with regards to obtaining speakers from the US on various topics of interest. EW also asks the universities to share information about upcoming opportunities for US students to learn about US Foreign Service jobs.

Ulrike Peter, Senior Policy Officer (International), Universities Scotland (UP) said she can echo all previous speakers on strong engagement, collaborations and exchanges with the US with many links – student, staff exchanges and research collaborations. The pandemic has created a lot of uncertainty but UP is pleased to hear the numbers of US students in Scotland has continued to rise. The US is the second largest market for Scottish students (after EU). There is not yet enough details on the Turing scheme, only a broad understanding, however this also means there is room to influence this initiative – for instance to extend the current timeframe. UP is hoping this can be introduced in the upcoming academic year and be a truly global project.

Q&A

DL MSP – Is online learning going to become a permanent feature? US students come not only for the academic factors but also for the overall experience.

Prof BM – Yes, this will stay, however in a hybrid and blended form. Scotland is a destination type of place for US students and there is still a demand for in person interactions and experiences.

Prof FC agrees. As the pandemic accelerated online higher education this will be fully integrated but recognises that Scotland and Edinburgh are attractive destinations as well.

Prof NW also agrees and notices that there are great opportunities with virtual exchanges as well – for instance with flexibility around visas.

Rachel Hamilton MSP (RH MSP) – How will universities adapt to the Turing scheme and what support will they need?

SJ – The main issue is clarity, the UK wants more students to travel abroad – this was the issue with the Erasmus program as there were more incoming students than outgoing. There needs to be also more information on financial support for students.

UP agrees on clarity and mentions eligibility issues. This program needs to be flexible in terms of mobility periods and make it accessible on a global level.

AJ outlines the links the University of Edinburgh has with Fios Genomics Company at Bioquarter, which is supported by Scottish Enterprise and Angel Investors. He adds that the US is one of the best places to take opportunities for students, staff and research.

AH added a short overview on the success of virtual trade missions to North America – including Chicago and Ontario and the work he is doing with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce.

Emma Harper MSP (EH MSP) Is there potential for collaboration with the space industry in Scotland with Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena?

Prof FC confirmed that the University of Edinburgh currently works closely with the US in that area.

SJ would be happy to link up with his contacts.

DW noted that there are 60 national labs across the US and best to contact via Washington D.C.

Peter Mowforth, CEO & joint founder/owner, INDEZ Ltd (PM) added that the Turing scheme originally came from Scotland.

Dean Lockhart thanks the audience and provides closing remarks

DL MSP continues to thank all for attending and thanks EW and Andrew Liddle at the US Consulate in Edinburgh, the Chambers involved and invites all to attend the next meeting in March 2021.