

**Cross Party Group on Women in Enterprise**  
**Minutes of the AGM held on Tuesday 11 September 2018**  
**Meeting Room 5**

**Present:** Gillian Martin MSP; Jackie Baillie MSP; Bill Bowman MSP; Anne Meikle (WES); Lynne Cadenhead (WES); Lyn Batchelor, Heriot Watt University; Christina Mackay, BeYonder (WES ambassador); Lisa Wardlaw, Young Enterprise Scotland (YES); Claire Halligan (YES); Rhiannon Sims, Oxfam; Criona Courtney, RBS; Susanna McGuinness, Girlguiding Scotland; Niamh Burns, Scottish Parliament (staff); Hermine Kinkela, CEO Mbikudi (WES ambassador); Lisa Thomson, Purpose (HR & Coaching) Ltd. (WES ambassador)

**Apologies:** Carolyn Currie (WES); Laura Galloway, Edinburgh Business School; Claire Martin, Grant Thornton UK LLP; Claire Dea, NHS; Jo Halliday, Talking Medicines; Evelyn McDonald, Scottish Edge; Mairi Damer, Word Up Communications; Emma Harper MSP; Lynn Mann, Supernature Oils; Yvonne Greaves, RBS; Vicky Brock, WES ambassador; Julie McIlroy, University of Strathclyde; Pheona Matovu, Radiant and Brighter (WES ambassador); Louise Macdonald, NACWG; Sarah Ronald, Nilehq; Rosie Garrigan, Efficax;

Gillian Martin opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. As this was the AGM of this CPG, there was a requirement to elect office bearers – Convenor; Vice Convenor; Secretary; Treasurer.

- Jackie Baillie proposed Gillian Martin as convenor. Seconded by Lynne Cadenhead.
- Gillian Martin proposed Jackie Baillie as vice convenor. Seconded by Bill Bowman.
- Gillian Martin proposed Anne Meikle as secretary. Seconded by Jackie Baillie.
- Anne Meikle proposed Carolyn Currie as treasurer. Seconded by Gillian Martin.

Those elected as follows –

- Gillian Martin MSP, Convenor
- Jackie Baillie MSP, Vice Convenor
- Anne Meikle WES, Secretary
- Carolyn Currie, WES, Treasurer

Introduction and Review of Year: Anne Meikle welcomed new members; outlined the aims of the CPG; and gave a brief summary of the work of the CPG 2017-2018.

Aims of the CPG are to -

- Establish a forum for the sharing of experiences and information on the position of women in enterprise in Scotland;
- Enable discussion and debate on the gender gap in enterprise, and seek solutions on how this might be tackled;
- Bring partners together with an interest in women and enterprise to develop a collaborative approach towards working together.

- The CPG had a core membership but thrived to ensure that a range of different organisations and individuals came together as part of this CPG. Having a thematic approach to each meeting, helped to bring in different specialists for the sharing of practice and knowledge.

Meetings throughout the year included -

**November 2017:** (Sponsored by RBS). 'The Importance of the economic empowerment of women' Guest Speaker: Dr Margo Thomas, - Associate Fellow at Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London. Margo lead the independent secretariat of the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment established by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General.

**February 2018:** 'Women in the Rural Economy'. Presentations by: Jackie Brierton, Enterprise Co-ordinator of GrowBiz, and Sally Shortall, Duke of Northumberland Chair of Rural Economy, Newcastle University. Sally was the Principle Investigator on the Scottish Government funded research on women in agriculture in Scotland with colleagues from the James Hutton Institute.

**May 2018:** 'Access to Finance'. Presentations – Yvonne Greaves, National Women in Business Manager, NatWest, Royal Bank of Scotland & Ulster Bank. Susan Harkins, Principal Officer, Business Gateway, City of Edinburgh Council. And also, contributions from Women's Enterprise Scotland Ambassadors

Key Points from Guest Speakers: The theme for this evening's meeting was, 'Young Women and Entrepreneurship', and Gillian Martin (GM) welcomed speakers, Lisa Wardlaw, Young Enterprise Scotland and Christina Mackay, BeYonder Ltd.

- Lisa gave a brief outline of her work at YES. Lisa is also a business owner so had experience to pass on to other young people looking to set up in business. While YES does not have a specific programme for young women, it is a thriving group with 60% of the businesses being started by young women. YES supports entrepreneurship and education programmes both at schools and in the college sector. Helping students into enterprise (through Bridge to Business programme) is a key part of the work.
- Claire Halligan had received support from YES and spoke about her experiences of setting up as a silversmith and selling her own jewellery designs. Claire spoke passionately about wanting to help others in the East End of Glasgow as it was an area she knew and knew the schools, etc. Claire highlighted what she was able to achieve with a small amount of money (£100 grant; £1500 grant) and that sometimes a small amount of finance was all that was required to get a start. Claire also talked about being referred to as a 'hobbyist' ....not a business women / entrepreneur / designer / silversmith.
- Christina told a story of, 'Imagine a Business in which....', outlining what could be achieved if we worked together to make change in Scotland. Chrissy outlined why Scotland can be a challenging place to do business – we need to challenge unconscious bias; we need to look at the system which excludes people from the labour market and / or training opportunities; transitioning from benefits to work is difficult; women find it difficult to return to the labour market; etc. She also pointed out that generally, the current policy framework is not fitting with real life situations and policy makers need to make better attempts at consulting and listening to business. (Chrissy gave the example of too few businesses being present at a recent Scottish Government conference on the National Performance Framework). Chrissy also suggested that more policy is 'joined up' – benefiting more people and businesses across different sectors (e.g. linking textiles and technology developments).

## General discussion

- Jackie Baillie encouraged those present to submit responses to the Scottish Parliament Inquiry into business support, as it was important that the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee heard the experiences of all types of business people across Scotland.
- There were many experiences around the room – some good, some bad – on the types of business support received. Research shows that a negative reaction at stages of business support can put people off for up to ten years.
- Many businesses ‘fall between the gaps’ – of different times for access for support. There needs to be a look at what is being delivered at ‘growth ‘level support.

Some key issues for consideration –

- Before seeking and accepting grants (read the small print!) as grants can be recalled.
- Need to think more about the Circular economy - why are we consistently using business methods that destroy the environment?
- Business Competitions in Scotland / UK – there are many of them but are we too focussed on this type of approach? Have we created a type of culture to be depending on competitions?
- The technology is there, and with little investment, we could do better to marry up different industries.
- Even working outside of Scotland (e.g. in England and other countries) appears to be easier sometimes.
- Building a business in the services industry can sometimes make you feel that you are being overlooked by business support agencies as ‘something tech’ always seems to get more interest.
- Gender segregation in the labour market – and in enterprise – starts in the early years so working in schools to get girls to realise their potential is crucial.
- What skills offerings do we have for new businesses / new entrepreneurs? There appears to be very little. However, some of the Universities are now offering modules in sales; working with different cultures;

Girlguiding Scotland representative (Susie McGuinness) gave a brief summary of some of the key points from their most recent UK Attitudes Survey -

- 53% of girls had thought about running their own business but one-third thought that their gender would hold them back;
- 34% of girls and young women aged 11-21 are put off politics because of how female politicians are represented in the media;
- 25% of girls aged 7-21 say they are very happy compared to 41% in 2009.

## Suggestions for Future Meetings

- An invite should be extended to Ivan McKee (previously a member of the CPG) in his new Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation at the Scottish Parliament.
- A focus on women in marginalised areas / communities.
- Access to finance – in particular, the importance of micro finance.
- Issues for older entrepreneurs / those seeking second careers later in life.

- We need to get more MSPs along to hear the discussions.

Gillian closed the meeting at 7.45pm to enable a bit of networking to take place and thanked everyone for attending.

**Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 6 November 2018.**