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Minute of the meeting held in the Scottish Parliament.

## PRESENT

Margo MacDonald MSP, Margaret McDougall MSP, Nanette Milne MSP, Richard Simpson MSP, Alison Johnstone MSP, Clare Adamson MSP, Fiona McLeod MSP, Peter Warren, Kim Atkinson, Lee Cousins, Ronnie Sloan, Susan Murray, Valerie Mitchell, Colin Rennie, Ewan Renton, Kathleen Doyle, Duncan Thorp, Diane Cameron, Jim Gunn, Scott Hastings, Jay Smith, Rick Kenney, Susan Jackson, Eilidh McCall-Lawrie, Mathis Junet, Karen Filsell, Steve Paige, Ian Sandbrook, Colin McMillan, Shelagh Jackson, Kyle Thornton, Jeannie Cranfield, Ian McCall, Nasreen Badiozzaman, Hugh Hall, Lewis McNaughton, Serena Fredrick, Eleanor Stanley, Faye Keogh, Anne Gray, Kenny Stewart, Brendan Stringer, Melanie Nairn, Torquil MacLeod, Douglas Bryce, Margaret Ann Fleming, Gemma Simpson and Simon Warr.

## APOLOGIES

Bob Aitken, David Arnott, Jackie Baillie MSP, Tom Bishop, Frank Burns, Jane Campbell Morrison, David Carey, Bruce Crawford, Eddie Dolloch, David Gibson, Nigel Holl, Katharine Jones, Gillian Lithgow, Walter MacAdam, Mark McGeachie, Jim McIntosh, Fiona McNeilly, Jim Moffat, Pete Nicholson, Keith Oliver, Neil Park, Charlie Raeburn, Brian Robinson, Anne Smillie, Cammy Watt, David Watt, Fiona Wernham, Stew Fowlie and Hazel Robinson.

## **Previous Minute:**

Matters Arising – None.

## Round Table Discussion

Margo welcomed everyone to the session which is a joint meeting between the CPG on Sport and the CPG on Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector. Margo introduced the session stating the opportunities for more businesses to recognise the enjoyment and benefits of volunteering.

**Brendan Dick, Director, BT Scotland**, began with a presentation about the BT Volunteering Programme. Key points were as follows:

The BT Volunteering Programme was established in 2008/9 and actively supports our peoples' efforts to get involved in their local communities in a number of ways:

- BT staff can take up to 3 days (or the equivalent of in hours) paid leave a year to volunteer for an activity of their choice
- BT supports up to 60 people per annum to complete 3-6 month full-time secondments with a range of charitable organisations requiring their specialist skills
- The BT volunteering database matches volunteering opportunities with willing and able people in the UK and globally
- The BT Volunteering Team organises training and support to help employees who already volunteer as Special Constables, on Parent Councils, Children's Panels, Justices of the Peace, & Emergency Response Units, providing a network through which to share ideas and experience
- BT formally supports a range of charity and community partnerships including ChildLine, UNICEF, British Red Cross, Citizens Advice Bureau, Comic & Sports Relief – providing a balance of funding and in-kind support including its technical resources and expertise
- Our people's contribution is recognised and celebrated each year through the BT People Awards and the BT Chairman Awards.

The programme aims to help everyone in BT to volunteer in a capacity which suits them and from which they benefit. BT's own web-based platform allows staff to search the system for volunteering opportunities (although staff are also welcome to identify their own opportunities of interest) as well as allowing staff to add volunteering opportunities onto the system. This technology could be made available more widely to support more organisations.

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The Core Principles of the Programme are:

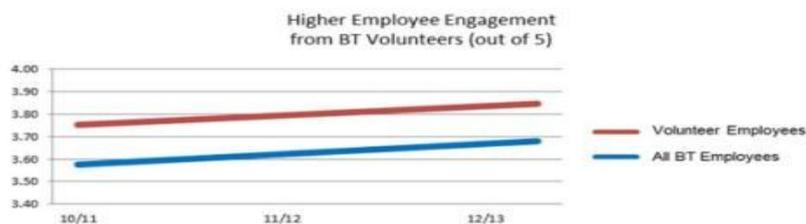
- Participation is voluntary – encouraged but not mandated
- Balance between employee led and business led initiatives
- Volunteering propositions should help develop our people's skills and make best use of our people's talents and BT's expertise
- Balance between in-kind investment and cash funding.

The key drivers are:

- To help build higher levels of people engagement as a pre-cursor to business growth
- To prepare members of the talent community for future leadership roles across the business
- To encourage improved team working
- To develop individual's capabilities so that they can realise their potential and engage effectively with customers
- To include all of our people globally in shaping and leading the way we do business internally and externally
- To find practical and inspiring ways of bringing BT's values to life
- To empower our people to use their skills and commitment to the benefit of local communities
- To make BT's products and expertise relevant and tangible to local communities
- To make working at BT enjoyable and a source of pride and
- To recognise and celebrate our people's commitment and achievements.

Brendan recounted a few annual key statistics, including:

10,000 BT employees volunteering in the UK  
1,000 BT employees volunteering in Scotland  
50,000 BT volunteering days  
£15.5m in kind contribution



1,000 BT Volunteers across Scotland supporting:

- Sports clubs
- School & youth organisations
- Charities
- Civic roles
- Digital inclusion - helping people get on line.

BT staff have been seconded to organisations including Crisis Skylight Services, Let Scotland Flourish, The National Trust for Scotland and Save the Children.

Inevitably, many BT staff involved in the programme give far more personal time than their allocated BT time – hence the requirement for the volunteering opportunity to have personal value and meaning to the employee.

The programme has a moral value and input to society but, beyond that, the employer more than gets the value back and the individual brings learning and support back to the employer too. It's also important to think about how a business fits into civic society.

Brendan stated that it's vitally important that we move from thinking about corporate business as a source of cash to looking to businesses to contribute to society in the best way - and what better way than by contributing skills, expertise and time to society. There is a vast difference between a business focussed on

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income as a staff motivator to a business where staff are supported, engaged with and have an empathy with their community and country, which makes for more rounded employees and members of society.

Through BT's volunteering programme, work feels more valuable for employees as they are also contributing to society. It also creates a better hook for employee retention.

Most large employers will say that they value volunteering, but unless there is a mechanism to make it easy to do and for corporates to support, participation and engagement is less likely.

With the presentation concluded, Margo MacDonald MSP asked Brendan whether most companies appreciate, as BT do, how much both employees and employers benefit from volunteering. Brendan replied that most companies had an understanding of the benefits, but without a mechanism in place to facilitate volunteering, ideals would not always be matched by actions.

Margo invited **Kevin Pringle, CEO of Basketball Scotland**, and **Janie McBrierty, a Basketball Scotland staff member who volunteers** to speak.

Kevin outlined that Janie first started with Basketball Scotland (BS) 6 years ago – when she asked Kevin if she could volunteer with BS to assist her in developing skills back to employment after a career break. Subsequently, Janie has been employed with BS for 5 years, with her volunteering having led to employment with BS. Janie approached Kevin to ask for some flexibility in her working hours to enable her to set up a new junior basketball club in Edinburgh. Kevin immediately saw the benefits to Janie and to BS, and re-arranged her hours of work accordingly.

Janie then spoke of the ways in which volunteering had benefitted her personally. There was extreme satisfaction in helping young people, via basketball coaching, to develop life skills. Beyond that, Janie's personal development had been enhanced. Without volunteering, for example, she would not have had the confidence to speak in front of an audience today. Janie also felt she was 'putting something back' into a sport which had provided a great deal of enjoyment for her family. Janie described her volunteering as the "best buzz ever". Volunteering has not only developed her skills, but it's developed her life skills as well as allowing her to feel a part of something. In addition to her confidence, she's also developed public speaking skills, personal development in relation to communication, speaking to people and engaging with new people. Janie said that she never would have dreamed of the benefits she'd get from this volunteering – she just wanted to give something back to a sport that's given her and her family so much. She's most proud now to see her children giving up their time to volunteer and to give something back too.

Kevin recounted the questions he had asked himself when deciding whether to support Janie's volunteering proposal: Will it cost Basketball Scotland? What with Basketball Scotland gain? What will the employee gain? He concluded that there was no cost, Basketball Scotland would gain increased employee loyalty and motivation and develop staff skills as well as a reduction in stress levels, and the employee would gain from those skills and a happier disposition.

Margo thanked all of the speakers and opened the floor to questions and discussion.

Margaret MacDougall MSP, Convenor of the CPG on Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector, outlined the personal benefits in volunteering, including improved self-esteem and self-confidence.

Nanette Milne MSP made reference to the recent Health and Sport Committee's Inquiry into Community Sport. As a member of the Health and Sport Committee, she felt that their recommendations overlapped into the subject of volunteering. Picking up two themes from the Inquiry's recommendations, Nanette asked how best Glasgow 2014 volunteers could be persuaded to continue once the Games were over; and how parents could be persuaded to remain in voluntary roles once their children finish with a sports club. Brendan Dick was especially interested in the parental side of things. He said there had to be an element of making people feel uncomfortable about *not* helping out. Brendan felt there was also a lack of knowledge of volunteering opportunities, and asked why there was not a website database of positions.

Valerie Mitchell, Head of Games Workforce at Glasgow 2014, sought to answer both Nanette and Brendan. She reassured those present that lessons from London 2012 vis a vis volunteers had been heeded. For example, the

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2014 volunteering form does have a tick box that asks whether applicants would be interested in volunteering after the Games and, as such, if their information can be shared with a relevant organisation in this regard. The 2012 Olympics/Paralympics did not have this. For individuals agreeing to this, their data would be passed on to Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) to promote further volunteering opportunities. Valerie continued that VDS and Event Team Scotland websites did currently advertise opportunities to volunteer, including in spheres beyond sport. Glasgow 2014 had been undertaking research which identified pitfalls in volunteering policies, and acting accordingly.

Diane Cameron of Senscot highlighted that not all volunteers in sport saw themselves as volunteers. Likewise, sports clubs did not define them as volunteers, and so may not know about/use website databases such as that mentioned by Valerie. Thus, awareness campaigns were vital. Brendan Dick agreed, and called for a concerted Government campaign on volunteering. Anti-smoking campaigns had made their messages the prevailing ones by persistent, strong messages; we need the same for volunteering.

Margo asked Alan Miller of **sportscotland** to explain their view on volunteering. Alan reaffirmed their strong recognition of the pivotal importance of volunteers to sport in Scotland. He pointed out that a **sportscotland** Volunteering in Sport Framework existed, copies of which were made available to those attending the meeting. **sportscotland** is investigating the Health and Sport Committee's report, including in relation to the volunteering recommendations, and in relation to opportunities to volunteer via the corporate responsibility route. Alan confirmed that, following the presentations today, he would ask **sportscotland** about their own employee volunteering policy.

Margo praised BT's work in this regard and asked Brendan if he was willing to share the information BT has on the benefits of volunteering and the support for volunteers, including the volunteer toolkit he mentioned, to support other businesses to engage with this opportunity for employer supported volunteering. Brendan confirmed that he was happy to help in this regard and would share this information; that helping to develop Scotland was the most important aspect and to help to get this movement going.

Nanette highlighted the diversity of volunteering roles which are available which can help to encourage and support everyone to get involved; whether it's through washing strips or officiating. She also noted it's important to recognise that many of these people may not think of themselves as volunteers.

There was then a discussion about barriers to volunteering. Kevin Pringle felt that volunteering was not sold properly; its benefits should be advertised, rather than an ethos of 'if you don't do this the club will fold' as exists. Margaret Ann Fleming of Scottish Volleyball talked of the practical difficulties in releasing staff to volunteer; in smaller organisations it could decimate the office – hence she welcomed the varying approaches available to support employees in their volunteering.

Lee Cousins of the Scottish Sports Association asked Brendan Dick how BT's approach could become the corporate standard. Brendan replied that, while there was no way to force this, the message had to be a societal and not merely corporate one as well as being a simple one. The values behind volunteering would have to be widely espoused, and adopted by companies who would then put structures in place. Perhaps business ambassadors could support the communication of key messages to other businesses – Brendan offered to act to support such a system. He stated that it is about a capability to make it easier for companies and employees to get involved and to ensure that this is a sustained process.

Fiona McLeod MSP reasserted the opportunities Glasgow 2014 offered in advancing Scotland's volunteering culture. Corporate entities could lead the way, with encouragement. She confirmed that the Scottish Government has introduced a policy for additional special time for staff to volunteer at the Commonwealth Games. However, Fiona clarified that for her, this was step one of the process. As has been outlined at the meeting today, the greatest opportunity is in the regular and sustained opportunities for employees to volunteer, and she will continue to raise this with the Government.

Gemma Simpson suggested that an opportunity would also be for employers to ask about volunteering experiences as a standard aspect of job interviews. This would also help to promote the contribution and value of volunteering.

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Before the meeting came to a close, Margo invited Valerie to update the Groups on when and how people can get involved in volunteering at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. Valerie stated that applications would close on 28 February, when sifting would begin. They are anticipating approximately 45,000 applications and 25,000 interviews for the required 15,000 Games Time volunteers. Interviews would be held from April to December 2013 in Glasgow, with approximately 1,000 interviews per week. She enthused that there has been a great response to far for what is the biggest peace-time recruitment drive ever in Scotland. Further information is available via: <http://volunteering.glasgow2014.com/>

Margo thanked Brendan, Janie and Kevin for their contributions, and extended that thanks to the Cross Party Group on Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector.

The date of next Cross Party Group on Sport was February 28<sup>th</sup> at 1pm.

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