

Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Industrial Communities

Tuesday 20th June 2023 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 4 at the Scottish Parliament

Present

MSPs

Colin Beattie MSP, John Mason MSP and Richard Leonard MSP.

Invited Guests – None.

Non-MSP Group Members

Cllr. Altany Craik, Cllr. Tom Adams, Cllr. Pam Armstrong, Ian McCrory, Bob Young, Keith Robson, and Roddy MacDonald.

Apologies

Alex Rowley MSP, Brian Whittle MSP, Cllr. Peter Henderson, Cllr. Russell Imrie, Cllr. Debbi McCall, Cllr. Michelle Campbell, Pauline Grandison and Professor Steve Fothergill.

AGM Agenda item 1

Colin Beattie MSP welcomed all present to the meeting.

Agenda item 2

Privacy Notice – Cross-Party Group on Industrial Communities.

This was noted by all present.

Agenda item 3

Minutes of the previous AGM approved as proposed by Bob Young and seconded by John Mason MSP.

No matters arising.

Agenda item 4

Election of Office Bearers – status quo moved by Bob Young and seconded by John Mason MSP. Colin Beattie MSP, Alex Rowley MSP and Roddy MacDonald re-elected to the positions of Convener, Vice-Convener and Secretary respectively.

Regular Meeting - Agenda item 1

The Minutes of the 18th April 2023 approved following being moved by Cllr. Tom Adams and seconded by Cllr. Altany Craik.

No matters arising.

Agenda item 2

Next Steps in Levelling Up the Former Coalfields – All-Party Group on Coalfield Communities – Roddy MacDonald, Alliance Scotland Director.

Roddy MacDonald provided an overview –

- In June 2023 the All-Party Group of Coalfield MPs launched the report of its Inquiry into 'Next Steps in Levelling Up the Former Coalfields'. The Inquiry was initiated in November 2022 and required significant input from the Alliance, which provides the secretariat for the APPG and therefore took the lead in organising the Inquiry and drafting the report. Member authorities covering the former coalfields also submitted written evidence.
- The report was launched on the 12th June 2023 in Westminster with good representation from MPs and Member Authorities. Significant media coverage has taken place following this event.
- The report was deemed to be a significant contribution to the debate on how best to regenerate our areas and the 12 recommendations were reviewed in detail. How can the CPG ensure that the report reaches the right places and people?
- It was agreed that Roddy MacDonald would liaise with Officers at CRT Scotland to ensure that the Report is issued to Committee Clerks; Scottish Government Ministers and MSPs representing Coalfield Areas.

- Bob Young updated the Group on the financial discussions between the CRT and the Scottish Government. It was noted that the CRT in Scotland still had not received its financial settlement for this year. It was agreed that Roddy MacDonald, in liaison with CRT Scotland, would draft a joint letter from Colin Beattie MSP and Cllr. Altany Craik raising concerns with key Ministers – Letters sent on the 22nd June 2023 to Shona Robinson MSP and Deputy First Minister/Cabinet Secretary for Finance; Neil Gray MSP and Cabinet Secretary for Well-Being Economy, Fair Work and Energy; and Graeme Day MSP and Minister for Higher and Further Education. A response was received on their behalf on the 17th July 2023 from Joe Fitzpatrick MSP and Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning. Copies of these letters are being circulated with the papers for the Cross-Party Group of October 2023.

Agenda item 3

Review of the CPG business activities over the past Parliamentary Session – Roddy MacDonald, Alliance Scotland Director.

Roddy MacDonald provided a brief overview of each meeting as follows.

- Meeting of the 27th September 2023 focussed on ‘Unlocking Potential Pilot Project’ initiated by the Open University with Anne Farquharson, Assistant Director, highlighting barriers to learning; Economic Inactivity, Long-term Sickness and the Pandemic a report published by the Alliance in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University; and an update on the allocation of levelling up funding across the nations of the UK.
- Meeting of the 29th November 2023 had in attendance Richard Lochhead MSP and Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work to discuss issues around the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Levelling Up Funds; and discussions took place on the 6 Principles Paper on Streamlining of Levelling Up Funding with subsequent letters being sent to the key Scottish Parliament Committee Clerks; COSLA and Scottish Government Cabinet Minister John Swinney MSP.
- Meeting of the 31st January 2023 received an update on the 6 Principles Paper and discussed the response from John Swinney MSP.
- Meeting of the 18th April 2023 reviewed a way forward in Investment Zones; the future of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund post March 2025; and agreed a joint letter from Colin Beattie MSP and Cllr. Altany Craik on the Levelling Up Fund, inviting Neil Gray MSP to attend a future meeting of the CPG sent on the 23rd April 2023. NB – Response received on the 9th October 2023 from Neil Gray MSP and is included in the papers for the CPG.

Agenda item 4

Discussions took place on potential future agenda items which Roddy MacDonald will pursue. These include Geothermals and the Coal Authority; the Withers Report; and issues around de-population. In the shorter term, it was agreed that the 'Vocation, Vocation, Vocation' report would be on the agenda for the next meeting – following discussions on the document between Alliance Members at a GB and Scotland level going forward. It is hoped the Cross-Party Group will provide an avenue to engage both Scottish Government and Shadow Ministers in due course.

Colin Beattie MSP thanked all for their attendance and contribution to this evening's business.

