

**Cross-Party Group on China**  
**Minutes of the Initial Re-registration Meeting**  
**Date: 14 September 2016**

**Attendance**

**MSP Members**

**Claudia Beamish MSP**

**Mary Fee MSP**

**Dean Lockhart MSP**

**John Scott MSP**

**Colin Smyth MSP**

**Special Guest**

**Mr. Zhang Huazhong, Vice Consul General of the PR of China**

**In Attendance**

**Daniel Cairns, Researcher and Caseworker in the office of Mary Fee MSP (Minutes)**

**Members**

**Apologies**

**1 Welcome and Apologies**

Mary Fee MSP welcomed everyone to the initial meeting of the Cross Party Group on China. **She gave a particular welcome to the Group's special guest, the Chinese Vice Consul General and said that she was very pleased that so many Members were present at short notice. She said that Graeme Pearson, the previous Convener of the Group, was a great friend. He had left the Group in a vey good shape and big shoes to be filled by the next Convener.**

**Apologies were noted.**

**2 Election of office bearers**

This was the initial meeting for the re-registration of the CPG on China for session 5 of the Scottish Parliament. In accordance with the terms of Cross-Party Groups for the Scottish Parliament, election of office bearers **would be** held on an annual basis.

Mary Fee **MSP** was nominated by John Scott MSP and seconded by Claudia Beamish MSP to be elected Convener of the CPG. **There were no other nominations and she was elected unanimously.**

Annie Wells MSP was nominated by Mary Fee MSP and seconded by John Scott MSP for the position of **Vice Convener** of the group. **There were no other nominations and she was elected unanimously.**

**Dr Judith McClure** was nominated by Mary Fee MSP and seconded by John Scott MSP to the position of Secretary of the Group. **There were no other nominations and she was elected unanimously.**

Therefore Mary Fee MSP was elected as Convener, Annie Well MSP as Vice Convener and Judith McClure as Secretary.

### **3 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising**

N/A as it was the first meeting of the new Parliamentary session.

### **4 Update on Parliamentary Business**

N/A as it was the first meeting of the Parliamentary Business.

### **5 Discussion of Work Programme for the CPG on China**

Mary Fee MSP began the discussion **of the Work Programme of the CPG on China. She said that the Minutes of the Group in the Fourth Session of the Scottish Parliament revealed very varied concerns:**

- **Direct Flights from Scotland to China**
- **The difficult of obtaining UK visas and the end of the Post-Study Work Visa**
- **The learning of Chinese at all levels in Scotland**
- **Twinning of Schools**
- **Support of SMEs wishing to work in China**

**The Convener said it was important now to build on the Group's work of the last session.** She started by making suggestions on a number of areas that the Group could investigate, proposing that the group should have a focus of three themes to guide its work over the next five years. These included:

- Inviting the Scottish Government to give an update **of its 5 year Strategy for Engagement between Scotland and the People's Republic of China**
- **Inviting Mr Michael Russell MSP, Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, to discuss how Brexit may impact on the Scottish China relationship.**
- **Discussing business links with China, including trade, financial services and fund management.**
- Inviting groups from the Chinese community living in Scotland to discuss their experience of living in Scotland and integrating into society.
- Inviting **the Minister for Education and** representatives of the education sector to discuss promotion of Chinese language learning, culture sharing and educational links. **The Convener said that she hoped there would be a regular Ministerial presence at the Group's Meetings.**
- Looking into the provision for more direct flights between China and Scotland

The discussion was then opened to the Group to give suggestions for the work programme. David Birrell **said that it was vital to inspire global talent, especially among University and College students. He recommended public and private sector collaboration, and involvement in the British Council**

**Generation UK: China network. The Convener asked him for speaker recommendations: David Birrell suggested that Universities with international strategies and strong student experience should share their plans.**

The MSPs present were then given a chance to discuss their ideas for the group. Claudia Beamish MSP congratulated the Convener on her election. **She agreed that the Group should investigate educational issues, such as the student experience and language and cultural sharing. For instance, she recommended South Lanarkshire's Universal Connection, a youth development group, which had facilitated fund-raising by a group of young people in order to visit China. A video had been made: this could be shown to the Group, with a presentation. Claudia Beamish MSP also suggested using a meeting to discuss climate change and areas of practice that could be shared between Scotland and China. She wondered too whether it would be possible to share and understand the challenges of issues concerned with human rights and trade unions, in order to make a positive contribution to their discussion.**

John Scott MSP congratulated the Convener on her election. **He proposed discussion of what new opportunities could arise for China and the UK after Brexit, especially in the food and drinks industry and links for direct flights. John Scott MSP also discussed a programme of exchange between future leaders. Colin Smyth MSP supported the proposals of post-Brexit and educational themes.**

**Catherine Cairns agreed with the need to discuss the promotion of trade links and of Scottish goods, and the Scottish Government's strategy in these areas. John Scott MSP agreed and said that James Withers, of Scottish Food and Drink, was leading an export drive.**

Luna Chao **Guo** suggested recruiting more Chinese students for Scotland; they could help SMEs grow and improve local experience and networking. She thought it important to discuss the student experience, and the Convener agreed. Luna Chao Guo made a second point, suggesting discussion of the idea of more twinning between Scottish and Chinese towns and cities. She herself was working to find a sister city for Laizhou in Shandong Province.

Dr Jim Scott from the University of Dundee informed the Group that he would continue with his review of progress in Chinese language learning in Scotland. He said that in general his findings showed that they had not improved and that he would be happy to share his findings in greater detail to the Group. The Convener said that she would be delighted for the Group to hear Dr Scott's latest analysis.

Wing Sie Ng welcomed the idea of encouraging more Chinese community input into the Group. She agreed that lobbying for more direct flights between Scotland and China was of great importance. She was an Ambassador for the Scotland China Education Network (SCEN): it would be good to have presentations from associations such as this.

**Nick Mackie continued with the theme of investigating direct flights. He said that he had been reaching out to contacts in China and had met the Lord Mayor of Shenzhen in the previous week, who had been most supportive of the potential role of Shenzhen Airlines.**

**Charlotte Rostek discussed the impact of auctions on the Scottish Asian Market and said that she would like to explore the educational dimension.**

David Birrell then went onto discuss what role the group could play in promoting inward investment from China into the Scottish economy, in particular for the development of infrastructure. The Convener agreed, and stressed the importance of linking with other relevant Groups at the Scottish Parliament. Catherine Cairns suggested that Scottish Enterprise could give an update on its events with investors and how it promotes investment between China and Scotland. Dean Lockhart MSP agreed with the idea of the group

looking into business links between China and Scotland. Global Scots was mentioned as a very useful network.

**Dr Jim Scott** proposed that the Group should consider the Scottish Government's Languages strategy. He was concerned that the 1+2 plan for Primary Schools did not relate to a comprehensive plan for secondary education. This was supported strongly by Yuwen Fortune. The Convener agreed that Education was clearly one of the Group's key areas of focus.

#### **ACTION**

**The Convener concluded the discussion by saying that Judith McClure would prepare the Re-Registration document for her consideration and submission. She would meet Judith McClure with her researcher Daniel Cairns to discuss the theme for the next meeting and to consider the Group's Work Programme. Members were encouraged to be in touch with Judith McClure about any points they wished to add.**

#### **6 AOB**

Next Meetings: Mary Fee MSP wanted to discuss with the Group when would be best to host meetings. After a discussion it was agreed that Tuesday and Wednesday Evenings would be best and that there would be one more meeting in 2016.

**Date of Next Meeting: 5:45 for 6.00 pm Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016, with Reception**