

CROSS PARTY GROUP IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ON CONSTRUCTION

From 1.00pm on Wednesday 8th February 2023

Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament

Minutes of Meeting

Present

MSPs

Monica Lennon MSP
Graham Simpson MSP
Mercedes Villalba MSP

Presenters

Maureen Douglas, Angus Council
Dale Thomson, SNIPEF
Stephanie Lowe, SNIPEF
Anne Galbraith, SECTT

Non-MSP Group Members Present

Stephen Fawcett, Homes for Scotland
Jocelyn Fleming, CIOB
Gordon Nelson, FMB
John Kane, Individual Member
Grahame Barn, CECA Scotland
Lauren Pennycook, CITB
Peter Reekie, Scottish Futures Trust
Cameron MacIver, AECOW
Gordon Brown, ICE Scotland
Stephen Dillon, Unite the Union

Others present

Graham Jackson, Thorntons Law LLP
Elaine Ellis, Skills Development Scotland
Lindsay Hewitt, Skills Development Scotland
Robert Wilson, Wilson Decorators Ltd
Alastair Lambe, McLaughlin & Harvey
Shauna Young, McLaughlin & Harvey
Tony Elliot, Robertson Group
Juliet Mallace, Energy Skills Partnership

Apologies

Chris Pateman, EPIC
Lee Cairns, Thistle Trade Group
Natasha Kinnear, ACE
William Crowe, ISE
Fiona Harper, SELECT
Fiona Hodgson, SNIPEF
Arthur McIvor, Energy & Utility Skills
Stuart Tennant, University of the West of Scotland
Alexander Burnett MSP
Jamie Hepburn MSP
Brett Amphlett, BMF
Colin Tennant, Historic Environment Scotland
Ann-Marie Waugh, Glass and Glazing Federation
Andrew Leslie, APS
Karen Stevenson, RIAS

1. Welcome from the Convener of the Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Construction.

Monica Lennon (ML) welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that as we had the room for only an hour, we would need to proceed swiftly.

ML added that for those who are new this CPG, we enjoyed a successful run of virtual meetings during the pandemic. We were eventually able to return to in-person meetings in the Parliament last October.

The Cross-Party Group is the forum for Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), construction industry stakeholders and interested

parties to engage directly with each other to raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges facing the sector and to inform the development of better policy.

In September 2021, our Cross-Party Group was formally awarded recognition to continue as a CPG for session 6 of the Scottish Parliament. Since then, we have met online or here in the Parliament to learn more about and discuss:

- The Materials and supply chain challenges impacting merchants and contractors across the construction industry.
- People and fair work within the construction industry.
- The challenge and opportunity for our industry in de-carbonising our built environment.
- The Scottish Government standard for net zero public sector buildings, with a case study of the new Fife College Learning Campus.
- And the Health and Safety Executive also shared and discussed their strategy, priorities and workplan for the construction with our CPG.

2. Matters arising. Notes from the previous meeting of the CPG, held on Tuesday 4th October 2022.

These were circulated in advance of the meeting. No comments raised, the notes were approved by Grahame Barn (GB) and seconded by Anne Galbraith (AG).

3. Update from the Treasurer, Grahame Barn.

GB confirmed that the accounts showed a cash balance of £230.27 as at 31st January 2023. GB confirmed that all CPG members will have just received an invoice for £100.

This is to cover catering costs for future meetings. GB noted that members had not been invoiced for contributions to the CPG for three years and he believed that the next time an invoice for contributions will be raised will be in three years' time.

GB apologised for the absence of the promised catering for today's meeting, this despite frequent attempts to contact the Parliament's catering team.

4. Skills, apprenticeships, and training in the construction industry.

ML noted that our CPG has previously discussed the labour and skills shortages impacting Scotland's construction industry. The ageing workforce presents a chronic challenge for the future capacity of the industry to meet client demand.

In January, the Construction Industry Training Board published the construction skills network forecast for 2023 to 2027. The data in the forecast highlights trends and how the industry will change year-on-year, allowing governments and businesses to understand the current climate and plan ahead for the future.

ML explained that plumbers, carpenters & joiners and electricians are amongst the critical trades needed to deliver the Scottish Government's commitment to meet its net zero carbon targets for 2045. As a whole, the construction industry is a principal industry for Scotland's environmental and economic well-being.

ML added that our skills system supports construction employers of all sizes in Scotland to recruit and train apprentices. In recent months, there have been significant challenges for apprenticeship training providers within and across the construction industry.

With encouraging demand from employers for new apprentices starts this year, it is vital that the construction industry's future workforce receives high quality training.

ML confirmed that in November she, along with members of this CPG, met Jamie Hepburn: the Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training. We discussed the current issues that are affecting construction apprenticeships – and ML agreed with the CPG's Secretary Gordon Nelson that, our next CPG meeting would focus on this matter.

ML welcomed our three speakers who will share their knowledge and perspectives on skills, apprenticeships, and training in the construction industry.

i. Scotland's shared apprenticeship programme. Presentation from Maureen Douglas, Angus Council.

Maureen Douglas (MD) from Angus Council introduced Scotland's shared apprenticeship programme. This is a powerful, long-term example of collaboration across multiple partners (education, local authorities, and industry) bringing additional jobs through apprenticeship opportunities into local communities.

MD's presentation is attached separately.

There were questions on from John Kane (JK) Peter Reekie (PR) Stevie Dillon (SD) and Anne Galbraith (AG) on aspects of the programme.

ii. Scotland's apprenticeship system: current training provision in construction.

Verbal presentations from Scotland and Northern Ireland Plumbers Employers Federation (SNIPEF) training services and from the Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust (SECTT).

Dale Thomson was originally due to present on behalf of SNIPEF Training Services but as Stephanie Lowe (SL) was able to attend SL presented.

SL gave a verbal presentation, key points being:

- SNIPEF Training Services has supported thousands of apprentices to complete their training to become qualified plumbers.
- Currently there is a lack of Scottish Government funding for apprenticeships across the construction industry and this funding freeze is impacting plumbing apprentices.
- SL explained that SNIPEF makes bids to Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in around August or September for the number of apprenticeships starts based on employer demand and training provider capacity.
- In October 2022, the funding shortfall meant there was a shortfall in funding for 66 plumbing apprentices. This places all

of them at risk of redundancy.

- SL questioned what the future would hold for the future of apprenticeships. SL explained that the Scottish Government has set a target of net zero by 2045, and it will be plumbers that will be needed to transition homes to low and zero carbon heating systems.
- SL added that colleges are also struggling to finance the delivery of construction training (including plumbing) and that it appeared apprenticeships are at the bottom of the pile (versus higher education) when it comes to funding.

AG's verbal presentation on behalf of SECTT was cut short as the committee room had been booked for another meeting. What follows is a summary from AG's script which was sent to GN following the meeting on the 8th.

- SECTT is a registered charity. Established in 1989 to manage the Scottish Joint Industry Board (SJIB) Electrical Installation apprenticeship programmes. SECTT works with approximately 800 employers.
- SECTT has just under 2900 apprentices/adult trainees currently in training. The electrical installation apprenticeship requires 4-5 years to complete with 20% off the job training, over 3 stages.
- Apprenticeship recruitment has far outstripped expectations, and most of the businesses which recruit apprentices are either micro- or small-sized and are based all over Scotland – the very businesses which the Scottish Government is keen to help and assist to grow.
- At the end of September 2022, SDS confirmed that no additional places would be available to any training provider. At this point SECTT had committed to almost 300 places over and above contract. By this time all apprentices had been recruited and approved centre classes were full.
- SECTT was granted an additional 116 places in December but in February it was confirmed that there are no further places available. This leaves SECTT with 157 unfunded places. SECTT's

Trustees are looking at all options to support these young people.

- AG acknowledges that that balancing the books is not easy but SECTT's ask is for a guarantee from the Scottish Government, delivered through SDS, that all demand led apprenticeship places will be funded and supported in 2023/24.

Before the meeting closed, ML noted that the CPG will need to escalate the issues raised by both SECTT and SNIPEF to the Scottish Government.

5. Any other business.

New member application. GN confirmed that AECOM would like to join the CPG.

No objections from members present, ML confirmed AECOM as a new member.

6. Date of Next Meeting.

To be confirmed but most likely before the summer recess which begins on 1st July.

ML thanked everyone for their contributions and apologised for the meeting being cut short.

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