

Cross-Party Group on Fair Trade

11 December, 1pm – 2pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Colin Smyth MSP (convenor)

John Mason MSP

Mercedes Villalba MSP

Invited guests

Russell Salton, Edinburgh City Fair Trade Group

Kiera Wilkins, Scottish Fair Trade

Louise Davies, Scottish Fair Trade

Non-MSP Group Members

George Davidson

Jane Forster

Ian Fowell

Ailsa Henderson

Lesley Hinds

Karena Jarvie

Martin Meteyard

Carol Morton

Morag Rennie

Anne Walsh

Apologies

Jeanette McIvor

Jan MacGregor

Agenda item 1 – welcome and previous minutes

Colin Smyth welcomed attendees.

Minutes of the meeting on 14 May were approved.

Agenda item 2 – International Fair Trade Towns Conference overview, Russell Salton

Russell explained that planning for the conference had been underway for the past year, focussing on securing finance to deliver the conference.

ScotMid, Scottish Government and Edinburgh City Council have agreed to help fund the event. Russell thanked Colin Smyth, Foysol Choudhury and Lesley Hinds for their help in securing funding support. There is still a shortfall of around £15,000 so other routes are being pursued.

Edinburgh University are providing the Nucleus Building for the conference free of charge and accommodation will be discounted at Pollock Halls.

A steering committee has been formed which includes political representatives, as well as other organisations from the Fair Trade movement.

A social programme is being developed by Hand Up events and Scottish Fair Trade are developing the conference agenda.

Agenda item 3 - International Fair Trade Towns Conference – South Africa experience, Kiera Wilkins

Kiera reported that she had attended both the World Fair Trade Organisation Summit in Cape Town, followed by the International Fair Trade Towns Conference (IFTTC) in Drakenstein. Both events brought together a wide range of people to discuss how to move the Fair Trade movement forward.

Kiera talked about the IFTTC. Drakenstein was the first host of the conference in Africa. The theme was 'cultivating equitable economies' and aimed to highlight the host city's best practices in various initiatives to contribute to its success as a Fair Trade city. She felt they did a good job in connecting stakeholders - businesses and government - as well as local campaigners.

There were over 240 delegates from countries ranging from Japan to Peru, also many attendees from Africa were able to attend. Kiera highlighted a walkathon that raised awareness of Fair Trade within the local community.

The conference provides a unique opportunity for the global movement to come together in person and inspire one another. Delegates fed back that they would like to see more interactive opportunities which will be considered in the 2025 conference planning. Kiera also said it would be positive to be able to fund attendees from economically challenged countries.

Agenda item 4 - International Fair Trade Towns Conference – 2025 plans, Louise Davies

Louise introduced herself as the new Chief Executive of Scottish Fair Trade. She explained that the Edinburgh conference, themed 'Fair Trade Communities: Local Action to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)', will bring together around 200 delegates, including international Fair Trade town representatives, Scottish campaigners, students, and stakeholders. The event will explore Fair Trade as a solution to global challenges, focusing on climate justice, local economic development, and a wellbeing economy.

Key goals include:

- Highlighting Fair Trade's role in sustainability and a new economy.
- Sharing examples of global and local Fair Trade action.
- Promoting Fair Trade Nation status to advance fairness, equity, and sustainability globally

The conference will feature panels addressing Fair Trade challenges, hackathons for innovative problem-solving, lightning presentations from global campaigners, and discussions on engaging young people and decolonising Fair Trade messaging. Inclusivity, intergenerational dialogue, and marginalised voices will be central. The conference will also explore the World Fair Trade Organisation ten principles and how they can be applied more broadly.

Scotland's experience as a Fair Trade Nation will be shared with the hope of inspiring other campaigners to pursue similar recognition. A positive outcome from Scotland's upcoming Fair Trade Nation assessment will hopefully be announced in February.

Beyond thought-provoking discussions, the event aims to showcase Scottish hospitality with activities like a ceilidh, coffee tastings, and a hill walk.

Louise asked the CPG to get involved by attending the conference, suggesting speakers, or sponsoring the event to support the vision of sustainability, fairness, and global equity.

Agenda item 5 – Q&A

Colin congratulated Russell and the team for bringing the conference to Edinburgh. He asked what the advantages will be for Edinburgh. Russell said he had been inspired by past conferences and felt the international focus would be good for the city.

Mercedes thanked the speakers and said she is keen to find out more.

John asked for clarification on the date, and was also interested in WFTO's ten principles and felt they are wider than traditional understanding of Fair Trade. He questioned whether this loses focus. He also asked how MSPs can help with the conference, for example in terms of accommodation or tours.

Russell confirmed that the dates are 29 – 31 August. He hopes people will be accommodated in Pollock Halls which is affordable.

Louise said there are areas to explore with Fair Trade schemes, and work to do to encourage both behaviour change and system change and the WFTO principles support new thinking around economic structures. She also talked about the benefits of Fair Trade in helping farmers and growers become more climate resilient. This is something to be discussed at the conference.

Colin asked how Fair Trade can be promoted in Scotland more widely through the conference, and whether the CPG can help.

Russell said the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce were involved, and connecting with businesses and campaign organisations to encourage them to think more about Fair Trade will be an important outcome of the conference. Louise suggested MSPs could support the conference by sharing information with campaigning organisations or ethically minded businesses that they interact with.

Lesley said we need to make it wider than Edinburgh, and suggested this could be done through young people and schools.

Karena said that Fairtrade Foundation have a campaign to encourage MPs to sign up to a Fairtrade pledge and suggested MSPs could ask their MP counterparts to sign up. We could also make sure Scottish MPs are aware of the conference. Colin asked Louise to send a list and MSP members can ask MPs to sign.

Agenda item 6 – Close

Louise said the next meeting may take the form of a reception after the Fair Trade Nation parliamentary debate, but Scottish Fair Trade are awaiting confirmation of this. Alternatively a meeting could take place in early March.

If anyone has ideas for meeting topics please contact Louise, CPG Secretariat:
louise@scottishfairtrade.org

Colin thanked speakers and attendees.