

Cross-Party Group on Fair Trade

Wednesday 6 March at 12.30pm, online

Minute

Present

MSPs

Colin Smyth MSP
John Mason MSP
Foyso! Choudhury MSP

Invited guests

Angy Ashcroft, KoolSkools
Sreeranga Rajan, Dibella India
Chad Morse, Scotland Malawi Partnership
Diana Firth, WOSDEC
Eileen Imlah, New College Lanarkshire
Louise White, Corpus Christi Primary School with two students

Non-MSP Group Members

Ann Wilkinson, Alford Fairtrade Group
Martin Rhodes, Scottish Fair Trade Forum
Alison Reith, North Lanarkshire Council
Anne Walsh, West Lothian Fair Trade Group
Catherine Newman, Scottish Fair Trade Forum
Charles Sim, East Ayrshire Fair Trade Group
Colum Scriven, Rainbow Turtle
Karen Creighton, Dumfries and Galloway Fair Trade Group
Ian Fowell, Linlithgow Fairtrade Partnership
Jeanette McIvor, Queensferry Fairtrade Group
Karena Jarvie, Perth and Kinross Fair Trade Group
Morag Rennie, North Lanarkshire Fair Trade Group
Philippa Jeffrey, Rainbow Turtle
Sandra Burt
Russell Salton, Edinburgh Fairtrade City Steering Group
Sally Romilly, One World Centre and Dundee FairTrade Forum
Yasmina Ferrigan, Palcrafts/Hadeel
Jeanie Molyneux, Orkney Fair Trade Group

Apologies

No apologies received

Agenda item 1

Colin Smyth MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting it was being held during Fair Trade in Education Week. The minutes of the meetings of March and November 2023 were approved.

Agenda item 2

Guest Speaker: Andy Ashcroft of Koolskools – founder of Koolskools and supplier of ethical and Fairtrade cotton school uniform: Andy introduced Koolskools, talked about the positive impact of the Fairtrade Premium in Fairtrade organic cotton farming communities at the start of the Koolskools supply chain in India. Andy went on to describe, the particular impact on education of the Fairtrade Premium and to inform about what actions we can take as responsible consumers.

Agenda item 3

Guest Speaker: Sreeranga Rajan of Dibella India – Head of a sustainable supply chain and producer of fair, transparent and regenerative organic cotton apparel: Ranga opened by presenting the environmental and social effects of the conventional cotton industry. He drew attention to the fact that the fashion industry is dominated by consumerism, driven by the constant need to produce more, produce faster and to produce cheaper to sell more. This results in unsafe and inhuman working conditions, neglected human rights, child and bonded labour, prevalent use of toxic chemicals, and wastes discarded into drinking water and agricultural land. Ranga proceeded by discussing Dibella India's different approach – one which brings hope, respect and freedom to the farmers and workers, and protection of the environment.

Agenda item 4

Guest Speakers: Louise White and students, Corpus Christi Primary School, Glasgow: Louise introduced the school's relationship with Koolskools, before the students presented the quality of the garments and the good relationship they have with Koolskools. Louise went on to highlight the issue of procurement as a barrier for schools interested in using Fairtrade school uniform.

Agenda item 5

Guest Speaker: Eileen Imlah, Lecturer, New College Lanarkshire: Eileen outlined the various benefits to her supported learning students of learning about Fair Trade including giving them the skills and information to take back to their communities as active participants in society, leading the way with important information to share. Fair

Trade enables them to consider the issue of interdependence in a difficult world, and it supports the College as one in which social justice is important.

Agenda item 6

Guest Speaker: Diana Firth, WOSDEC: Diana introduced the work of WOSDEC and IDEAS, and of the other DEC's across Scotland. Diana focused on an activity used to teach about child labour used in the production of mobile phones, and how Fair Trade prohibits child labour, in line with the Children's Right No. 32. Diana explained how the Scottish Fair Trade Forum and WOSDEC have worked in partnership previously, including on the resource Fair Trade, Sustainability and Global Citizenship, and she invited the audience to contact WOSDEC in the future.

Agenda item 7

Questions and discussion: There was a question about the cost of Fairtrade cotton uniforms in comparison to other uniform and Andy Ashcroft and Ranga Rajan explained that it was possible for Fairtrade cotton uniforms to be competitive on price by not taking so much in profits from sales. Ranga also explained how his company supplied a wide range of different businesses not just those supplying Fairtrade cotton uniforms. In answer to a question from the convenor, the students from Corpus Christi Primary School explained how they had found the products to be hardwearing and good quality. They also explained what they had learnt about cotton and Fairtrade.

Agenda item 8

The meeting closed at 1.30pm.