

Cross-Party Group on France

Wednesday 11 February 2026, 13:00-14:30

Minute of Joint Ordinary and Annual General Meetings

Present

MSPs

- Daniel Johnson MSP (Convener)
- Jamie Greene MSP (Deputy Convener)
- Elena Whitham MSP (Member)

Invited guests

- Harish Lokhun, Head of Education, British Council Scotland
- Charlotte Hyvernaud, Cooperation Attaché and Course Director, Institut français d'Écosse

Non-MSP Group Members

- Stéphane Pailler (Consul General of France)
- Archippus Sturrock (Secretary)
- Douglas Bosphore-Ward MBE
- Jean Roman-Samaké
- Luke Carroll
- Christine Reynet
- Rogelia Pastor-Castro
- Sarah Lachhab
- Valerie Chauffaille
- Angela Mathis
- Cédric Gerbier

Apologies

Angus Robertson MSP

Welcome and approval of minutes of ordinary meeting (24 April 2025)

The meeting was opened by the Convener. Members agreed the minutes of the ordinary meeting of 24 April 2025.

Annual General Meeting

The Convener suspended the ordinary meeting and opened the AGM. Quorum was confirmed.

Members agreed that the Group should continue, and agreed to continue with the current office bearers and current secretariat arrangements. The following office bearer roles were confirmed:

- Convener: Daniel Johnson MSP
- Deputy Convener: Jamie Greene MSP
- Secretary: Archippus Sturrock

Members agreed to continue with the Group's purpose and remit. The AGM was then closed and the ordinary meeting resumed.

Update from the Consul General of France

The Consul General reflected on activity in Scotland to mark the 730th anniversary of the Auld Alliance and set out priorities for 2026, including preparations for the 80th anniversary of the Institut français d'Écosse in Edinburgh in November 2026. The Consul General noted proposals for a week of activity and invited suggestions for potential supporters.

The Convener noted that any formal action would require member agreement, and proposed that the Group could consider writing to the relevant Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary to encourage support for initiatives of this kind.

730 Years On: A New Alliance Based on Language and Culture

Members heard short contributions and discussion focused on language learning and cultural exchange, including:

- the value of international school partnerships and youth engagement routes, and the role of the British Council's work in supporting these links
- planned engagement with Education Scotland via a policy roundtable on language learning, linked to the curriculum improvement cycle
- challenges in primary and early secondary language teaching, and the importance of supporting teacher confidence and capacity
- the importance of university language capacity to underpin future teacher supply
- proposals for practical resources linked to the Tour de France, with separate packs for primary and secondary schools and potential alignment with health and wellbeing and environmental themes through partner activity
- the role of modern language assistants, including the importance of equitable access across state schools, and recent examples of local arrangements enabling assistants to be shared across schools
- prospective developments on Erasmus+, and the potential significance of that route for universities and language assistant programmes.

Open discussion on language policy

Members discussed the decline in modern language uptake in Scotland, including the impact of qualification and curriculum reforms, and the need for interventions that could make a practical difference over the next 12 to 18 months. Members also discussed the importance of framing languages as complementary to STEM and economic engagement, rather than in competition with it, and the role of language learning in building long-term Franco-Scottish relationships.

The Convener noted the Cross-Party Group's intention to prepare a short legacy note for the next session of Parliament, reflecting that Cross-Party Groups dissolve at dissolution and that future members would need to establish any successor Group.

Any other business

A member outlined interest in participating in a summer Franco-Scottish event in France, linked to supporting Scottish makers and businesses, and referenced

ongoing activity connected to a tourism information point hosted at the Institut français d'Écosse. The Secretary invited the member to share further details by email so that relevant contacts could be considered.

Conclusion

The Secretary thanked speakers and attendees and the meeting was closed.

As this was the final meeting of the Cross-Party Group on France in the current session of Parliament, these minutes will be circulated to attendees and speakers for confirmation.