

Cross-Party Group on Germany

Date and Time: Wednesday 11 February 2026, 6pm-8pm

Minute

Present:

MSPs:

- Paul Sweeney MSP
- Colin Beattie MSP

Invited guests:

- Guest Speaker: Arthur-Hans Thellmann, Meyer Werft, Head of Policy & Regulatory Strategy
- Guest Speaker: Sam Mayall, Zelim
- Guest Speaker: Ross McEwen, British German Association

Non-MSP Group Members:

- Allan Dickson
- Annette Gotzkes
- Anne Simms
- Arthur-Hans Thellmann
- Bernhard Blumenau
- Hanna Dede
- Holger Theissen
- Judith Blum
- Leonore Frame
- Maximilian Munch
- Peter Muller-McDougall
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Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Approval of Previous Minutes (Germany)

Colin Beattie recounted the minutes from last session. All minutes were unanimously passed.

Agenda Item 2 – Guest Speaker: Arthur-Hans Thellmann, MEYER WERFT, Head of Policy & Regulatory Strategy

- Colin and Paul welcomed Arthur and transferred the floor, who commenced a presentation.
- Arthur presented a summary of the past year and outlined the shipyard's historical background.
- Meyer Werft, Papenburg's sole shipyard, operates Europe's largest laser centre and is a leading cruise-ship builder. After facing financial challenges, the German federal government and Lower Saxony took an 80% stake, providing capital and guarantees; this is temporary with plans to privatise. Despite difficulties, Meyer Werft remains technologically advanced, internationally sought after, and holds a robust orderbook.

Questions

- Paul thanked Arthur for his comprehensive overview of Meyer Werft and remarked that there are huge opportunities for collaboration through the supply chain
- Patrick Carnie asked Meyer about their ongoing success at Papenberg and actions taken by the German shipbuilding sector to secure strategic recognition.
- Arthur cited the laser centre, efficient manufacturing, and research as key advantages, noting workforce management and high production capacity as ongoing challenges.
- Cruise ship construction has become increasingly important for the sector's strategic status alongside defence.
- Arthur noted that during the pandemic, Meyer Werft supplied fuel tankers; 80% of suppliers are EU-based, underscoring their defence role.
- Facility benchmarking and processes were also discussed.
- Concerns were expressed about state ownership and Scotland's lack of merchant shipbuilding; Meyer Werft's R&D receives government funding but not subsidies.
- Paul commented that a third of the world's cruise fleet operated in Scottish waters last year; future engagement opportunities were discussed, including supplier markets and innovation.
- Ongoing challenges around supply chain access were noted.
- Paul and Colin expressed their appreciation to Arthur for his detailed overview.

Agenda Item 3 – Sam Mayall, CEO Zelim

- Paul handed over to Sam who proceeded to provide a comprehensive overview of Zelim.
- Sam shared that Zelim is a rapidly growing maritime safety innovator developing AI-driven detection, autonomous rescue vessels, and rapid recovery tools to transform how people are protected at sea. Their work is highly relevant to Scotland's maritime ecosystem, offshore wind operations, and wider SAR modernisation.
- Paul then invited the group for wider discussion.

- Sam stressed the need for strong stakeholder support.
- Colin Beattie enquired about range of Zelim’s ‘ZOE’ Intelligence system for Detection Man Over Board (MOB) situations; Sam confirmed a maximum of 4–5 nautical miles, with up to 10 for smaller objects, and stated integration with vessel radar is possible.
- Questions were raised about insurance reductions with the place, which Sam said are assessed individually.
- Issues with ‘digital twinning’ and sensory locations were flagged for further collaboration.
- Paul thanked Sam for his contribution.

[Break]

Agenda Item 3 – Introduction - Ross McEwen, British German Association

CB provided an introduction to Ross McEwen (PRESENTATION).

Ross provided an overview of the British German Association and highlighted its role in fostering connections and promoting collaboration between British and German communities. He emphasised the Association's commitment to supporting cultural, educational, and business exchanges, noting recent initiatives aimed at encouraging youth engagement and professional networking. Ross also shared details of upcoming events and programmes designed to strengthen bilateral ties and invited attendees to participate in future activities.

Agenda Item 6 - AOB

Date for next meeting: TBC

Close