

# **Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Industrial Communities**

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 at 6.00pm in  
Committee Room 6 at the Scottish Parliament

## **Present**

### **MSPs**

Colin Beattie MSP, Alex Rowley MSP and John Mason MSP.

Invited Guests – None.

## **Non-MSP Group Members**

Cllr. Russell Imrie, Cllr. Tom Adams, Cllr. Debbi McCall, Bob Young, Pauline Grandison, Ian McCrory, Lynne Davies, Meirion Thomas (via MST) and Roddy MacDonald.

## **Apologies**

Richard Leonard MSP; Cllr. Altany Craik, Cllr. Pam Armstrong, Keith Robson and Chris Whitwood.

## **AGM Agenda item 1**

Colin Beattie MSP welcomed all present to the meeting.

## **Agenda item 2**

Privacy Notice – Cross-Party Group on Industrial Communities.

This was noted by all present.

## Agenda item 3

Minutes of previous meeting approved with the amendment of Alex Rowley MSP being added to the apologies. It was noted that Kate Forbes MSP and Cabinet Minister was unable to attend this meeting. It was agreed to re-engage with her Office.

N.B. Following engagement, Tom Arthur MSP and Minister for Employment & Investment agreed to attend a future meeting of the Cross-Party Group.

## Agenda item 4

Coalfields Regeneration Trust in Scotland – Building a Sustainable Future – Outline Business Case – Bob Young CRT Trustee and Pauline Grandison, Head of Operations CRT.

Bob and Pauline provided a detailed update.

- A response to a joint letter from Colin Beattie MSP and Cllr. Altany Craik to Tom Arthur MSP and Minister for Employment & Investment was received. It was a detailed response, outlining that his officials have undertaken an initial review of the outline business case and at the present time the Scottish Government has no available budget or mechanism within Regeneration budgets to provide capital or resource funding for new proposals of this scale.
- However, the correspondence also noted that David Cowan, Head of Regeneration & Place was able to join the CRT at their parliamentary event on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024. It was also noted that David would be meeting with the CRT's recently appointed CEO Andy Locke in January 2025 providing an opportunity to build on the close working relationship between the Scottish Government and the CRT to optimise their collective resources to benefit communities most in need.
- The engagement between the CRT and Scottish Civil Servants has been positive overall. The funding level for 2024/25 looks like staying the same as the previous year.
- We will receive ongoing updates from our CRT colleagues going forward and the members of the CPG reiterated their support for the work of this organisation. The CPG also gave support to Colin Beattie MSP to further investigate further issues around procurement. The CPG will be kept updated on any developments in this regard.

## **AGENDA Item 5**

State of the Scottish Coalfields 2024 - Report from Sheffield Hallam University. A response from the CRT – Bob Young Trustee and Pauline Grandison, Head of Operations Scotland.

The following key points were made in relation to the research paper.

- The report presents a very challenging picture for our areas. This includes issues around health, education, employment and deprivation.
- Health problems are widespread. In Ayrshire/Lanarkshire and Fife almost 10 percent of all adults report 'bad or very bad health' and around 10% of all residents claim disability benefits.
- The 'job density' – the number of jobs in the coalfields per 100 residents of working age – remains well below the Scottish average.
- Job quality – more than half of all employed residents in Scotland's former coalfields work in manual jobs.
- Deprivation – in Ayrshire/Lanarkshire, 45% of coalfields neighbourhoods are in the most deprived 30% in Scotland. In Fife it is 50%. Lothian is somewhat less deprived at 30%.
- Discussion took place on how to make best use of the document and it was agreed to circulate to key stakeholders.
- It was noted that Alex Rowley MSP will be taking some of the key issues raised in the document forward with Fife Council's Regional Development Officers. A key outcome, in due course, will be to create internal community debates and continue to maintain a high profile on this topic with the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, Councils et al.

## **AGENDA Item 6**

Priority Agenda Items for the CPG going forward 2025/26 – Open Forum.

Following detailed discussions, it was agreed to keep the following issues on our radar going forward.

- Regeneration Initiatives/Community Wealth Building/Resilience agendas in Scotland and Europe.
- CRT Scotland pertinent issues and ongoing engagement with the Scottish Government. Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP and Cabinet Secretary was mooted as a potential future guest to the Cross-Party Group.
- Develop links with our colleagues in Wales.
- Keep close tabs on Westminster funding/replacement funds going forward and its impact on communities in Scotland.
- Employment and training issues with a view to closing the skills gap. Engagement with Skills Development Scotland going forward.

## **AGENDA Item 7**

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025 from 6.00pm at Holyrood. The meeting will be hybrid. *This meeting had to be rescheduled until Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May due to Parliamentary Business.*