

Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Industrial Communities

Tuesday 23rd November 2021 at 6.00pm via Microsoft Teams

Present

MSPs

Colin Beattie MSP, Richard Leonard MSP, John Mason MSP, Paul McLellan MSP

Invited guests

Non-MSP Group Members

Cllr. Altany Craik, Cllr. Peter Henderson, Cllr. Russell Imrie, Laura Cunningham, Ian McCrory, Malcolm Leitch, Stuart Douglas, Professor Steve Fothergill, Roddy MacDonald

Apologies

Cllr. Robin Currie, Cllr. Mohrag Fischer, Bob Young

Agenda item 1

Convener Colin Beattie MSP welcomed all present to the meeting.

Agenda item 2

Privacy Notice – Colin Beattie MSP read through the Privacy Notice for the Cross-Party Group on Industrial Communities.

Agenda item 3

Minutes of the previous meeting and Matters Arising.

The Minutes were proposed by Cllr. Russell Imrie and seconded by John Mason MSP with no matters arising.

Agenda item 4

A 'Levelling Up Fund' in Name Only? – discussion led by Professor Steve Fothergill.

Professor Fothergill provided an assessment of the first round of successful bids into the UK Government Levelling Up Fund.

- As part of the recent Spending Review the UK Government published a list of the first 105 successful bids, worth £1.7bn, into its new £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund. A key question – is the UK Government's choice of winners likely to contribute significantly to Levelling Up?
- Of the 94 successful bids only 42 are in the poorest third of sub-regions in terms of GVA per head. 14 of the successful bids are in sub-regions where GVA per head is above the UK average including 6 in London.
- Have the North, Scotland and Wales been short changed? Possibly. Only 43 of the successful bids (41% of the total) are in those areas which also account for 36% of the UK population.
- The UK Government has broadly followed its own list of priority areas. 62 of the successful bids are in Local Authorities most in need of investment from the fund.
- Does this look like a stitch up? Probably not. 45 of the successful bids are in Labour led Authorities compared to 24 Conservative led Authorities.
- Will the successful projects help deliver Levelling Up? This looks questionable.
- Verdict? So far, the Levelling Up Fund looks less like a new tool to narrow gaps in prosperity and more like England's Growth Fund under a new name.

Agenda item 5

Scottish Government Just Transition – A Fairer, Greener Scotland – An Opportunity for our Communities? Stuart Douglas, Head of Operations, Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

Stuart Douglas provided a comprehensive overview of the key issues being experienced by our communities within the context of the 'Green Agenda'. Points were raised focussing on issues such as;

- How do we secure good jobs in our areas during this time of transition?
- How do we fund the Scottish Government's ambitions?
- Where does the CRT sit in all of this?
- Where do former coalfields sit in all of this?
- It was noted that the NPF4 has referenced former coalfield areas. This will be picked up in any CRT/Alliance Scotland response to the Scottish Government consultation process which ends on the 31st March 2022.
- N.B. The detailed presentation has been issued to our data base and is further appended to the CPG Papers for ease of reference.

Agenda item 6

Alliance Scotland – Land & Property Development – A Series of Asks Update – Roddy MacDonald, Alliance Scotland Director.

Roddy MacDonald provided an overview.

- The purpose of the discussion paper is to formulate a number of 'Asks' from our Member Authorities to the UK and Scottish Governments when dealing with Land & Property Development issues in Scotland, and in particular within our Member Authorities.
- The key 'Asks' were outlined as – Grants Not Loans; A Multi- Annual Approach; Share the Burden of De-Risking; Adopt a Wider Infrastructure Policy approach; Embrace the Wider Planning Issues; Optimise the Green Agenda for our Areas; and Optimise the Impact of Funding.
- It was agreed that a joint letter from Colin Beattie MSP and Cllr. Altany Craik be sent to Kate Forbes, MSP and Cabinet Secretary outlining these 'Asks'.

Agenda item 7

Alliance Scotland – request to engage with Parliamentary Committees – An Update – Roddy MacDonald, Scotland Director.

Roddy MacDonald provided an overview.

- At the Cross-Party Group on the 28th September 2021 the Alliance in Scotland were asked to consider how to best engage with the Finance and Public Administration Committee and the Economy and Fair Work Committee to see how the Alliance could best influence future agendas.
- The Alliance in Scotland agreed to work closely with the Cross-Party Group in this respect as we move forward into 2022.
- Future issues of engagement would include Subsidy Control, EU Structural Fund Replacements and 'keep an eye' on the NPF4 developments.
- NB. Professor Steve Fothergill was invited to give evidence to the Scottish Parliament Economy and Fair Work Committee Session of the 12th January 2022 on the Subsidy Control Bill. The link is below.
- <https://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13515>
- Engagement with other Committees will be reviewed during 2022 as the key issues ripen.

Agenda item 8

AOCB

It was noted that the Alliance Scotland and Coalfields Community Trust intend to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation process on NPF4. Focus will be on the issues of particular pertinence to our organisations, and it is not anticipated that a

response will be made to all of the 70 questions outlined in the Scottish Government's consultation document. The Cross Party Group will be kept in the loop with regard to the consultation responses.

Agenda item 9

Date of Next Meetings

The following dates have been agreed.

- Tuesday 8th February 2022 at 6.00pm via MS Teams; Tuesday 29th March 2022 at 6.00pm; Tuesday 21st June 2022 at 6.00pm – this will also be the Annual General Meeting.