

Cross-Party Group on Malawi

Wednesday 25 September 2024

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Alexander Stewart MSP

Sarah Boyack MSP

Ben Macpherson MSP

Invited guest

IN-PERSON:

Right Reverend Dr Shaw Paterson, Moderator of the Church of Scotland

Non-MSP Group Members

David Bone

Jane Bristow

Alison Campbell

Benjamin Carey

David Clarke

Heather Cubie

Ricci Downard

Karen Downard

Moir Dunworth

Carol Finlay

Joyce Nicoll

Mike Parker (Aid to Alexander Stewart MSP)

Kevin Simpson

Natasha Adodo, SMP

Stuart Brown, SMP

Chad Morse, SMP

Dorothea Nelson, SMP

ONLINE

Enock Bamusi, AMS
Lorna Bell
Dr Kathleen Breslin
Liz Chalmers
Gertrude Chirambo
Thomson Chirwa
Jane Forster
Patrick Grady
Dan Gunn
Eve Hartswood
Tedd Kachingwe – Sisya, Malawi High Commission UK
Duwa Kandoje, Malawi HC First Secretary
Joanna Keating
Sue Kevan, Raven Trust
Laurel Kilgore
Dr Thorsten Koenig
Alan Laverock, Bananabox Trust
Robin MacGregor
Ross Macnab
Ian Mitchell, Beath Malawi Partnership
Tracy Morse
Ann Phoya
MacDonald Sembereka, Malawi High Commission UK
Cameron Smith
Peter West, Honorary Consul

Apologies

Christine Jardine MSP

Dr Alasdair Allan whilst in an acting Ministerial position, parliamentary regulations require him to stand down from the CPG. We know that Alasdair plans to return to us when he can

Welcome, apologies and minutes of last meeting

Alexander Stewart MSP welcomed attendees, recognised MSPs in attendance and noted apologies where these had been given. The minutes of the previous CPG were proposed by Sarah Boyack MSP and seconded by Moira Dunworth.

AGM of the CPG, including (re-)election of Co-Convenors, Co-Vice Convenors and Secretary

o Alexander Stewart MSP and Liam McArthur MSP were re-elected as Co-Convenors. Ben Macpherson MSP was elected as Co-Convenor and happy to join the group. (Proposed by Sarah Boyack MSP, seconded by Heather Cubie).

- o Sarah Boyack MSP was re-elected as Vice Co-Convenor. (Proposed by Alexander Stewart MSP, seconded by Heather Cubie).
- o Stuart Brown, Interim CEO of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, was re-elected as Secretary, proposed by Alexander Stewart MSP and seconded by Moira Dunworth. Alexander thanked Stuart and his team on behalf of the CPG, for the support they provide.

The Moderator of the Church of Scotland's Visit to Malawi

In a passionate presentation, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland shared with the Cross-Party Group (CPG) how moved he was by the very genuine hospitality that he encountered in Malawi. Dr Paterson was there to participate in the centenary celebrations of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), in which Scotland's role was given special mention by Malawi's President Chakwera.

Many of the Moderator's reflections, on what was his first visit to Malawi, struck a chord with CPG members. Dr Paterson paid tribute to early Scottish missionaries including medics, engineers and teachers and highlighted the warmth of the Malawians that he met, praising their skills and knowledge.

Dr Paterson did not underestimate the scale of Malawi's challenges. He spoke of opening a bridge, rebuilt after Tropical Cyclone Freddy and the importance on that occasion of him learning about and respecting Malawian cultural practices. He delighted in the beauty of the landscape, participated in a full and varied programme and was moved personally and religiously by a rendition of the "Hallelujah" chorus. He illustrated the report of this visit with pictures – a modern day slide show.

Q&A

HC gave thanks to the Moderator for sharing his impressions from his impactful first visit. And commented: "As chair of the SMP [the SMP] Partnership Principles are essential to what is done by the partnership, it is all important and there is so much to learn from friends in Malawi. Hymn 710 in CH4 *"I have dream a man once said..."* sums up what we are trying to do in our friendship between each other. If there is opportunity for friends from Malawi to join us in Scotland that is even better as there is a real exchange."

Q: Many great practical things are being achieved through partnerships; within the World Church - how do you see spiritual health being improved through faith partnerships?

A: As someone who came from humble beginnings the Moderator firmly believes that by caring for one another and being with the people, sharing moments the gospel becomes real. There is a strong faith out in Malawi.

Q: What is your most memorable aspect of your trip?

A: Most memorable moment was the opening of the bridge. The girl who approached me with scissors had taken time out of the school holidays. The bridge was connecting two halves of the community to safely cross the river from home to school and to medical centre. A bridge with foundations built in running water that (in our terms) was relatively inexpensive was life changing.

AOB and Close

Thanks from Chair – Alexander Stewart MSP

Alexander Stewart MSP thanked the Moderator for sharing his experiences and snapshots, attendees and the Scotland Malawi Partnership. After the meeting closed, in-person attendees had the opportunity for networking over Malawi gin and tonics or soft drink.